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BY THE AUTHOR OF

'FRIENDS IN COUNCIL'

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. W. E. FORSTER, M.P.,

ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I dedicate this work to you.

Our unbroken friendship, and the pleasure I have had in working under and with you, would amply justify this dedication.

But I have also a special motive which causes me to inscribe the work to you. Free, as you now are, from what are justly called the "trammels of office," you will be able to give more attention to those social subjects which are chiefly discussed in this volume.

Your knowledge of all classes of your fellow-countrymen, your sympathetic nature,

and your skilful management of busine[ss], point you out as a man who could do g[ood] service in promoting measures which ha[ve], for their end and aim, an increase of [the] comfort and well-being of all classes of [the] community. These measures are happ[ily] beyond the region of political strife; [but] the final purpose, at which they aim, can[not] be attained without aid from the leadi[ng] statesmen of the day.

I take the opportunity, which this le[tter] affords me, of mentioning that Mr. Milv[er]ton's Essays were written long ago: l[ong] before they were read to the "Friends [in] Council." If I were not to make this sta[te]ment, it would seem ungracious on his p[art] that he had not alluded to the many gr[eat] efforts which have already been made [by] individuals for the furtherance of th[ose] objects which he had most in view w[hen] writing some of these essays.

In providing open spaces for recreation [in] and near large towns, and in forming tow[n]ships of dwelling places for artizans, sun[dry]

benevolent persons have already bestirred themselves, and have effected much good. It is but just to notice these improvements; but, as Mr. Milverton says, if all the benevolent and powerful people were to interest themselves for a whole generation in effecting such objects, too much would not be done to overtake the consequences of former oversight and neglect.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

THE AUTHOR.

London, November, 1874.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE so often told who I am, and explained who the Friends in Council are, that I shall not do so on the present occasion, and will only say that they consist of several persons who are really friends, and that I, Alexander Johnson, am the private secretary to one of them—namely, to Mr. Milverton.

It has been their habit for many years to spend their Easter vacation together; and it has often been their practice to take some one subject for their consideration, and to endeavour to work that out.

This time their place of meeting was not the usual one. It was at a villa on the banks of the Thames. Sir John Ellesmere was the host, and not Mr. Milverton. They

had chosen this place of meeting, as, on account of the change of Administration, one of their number was more closely occupied than usual, and could not have joined them, if they had been at a distance from London.

I will commence at once with the conversation that led to the subject which they finally resolved to adopt for discussion.

Ellesmere. Wish for it? Of course I wish for it. There are also a good many other things to be wished for—that it should never rain, except at night, between the hours of twelve and four; that fishes should have no bones; shrimps, no shells; and that oysters should open of their own accord, immediately after grace has been said; that there should be no irregular verbs in any language, and no genders to the substantives; that Commentators' notes to difficult passages should not omit, in more than nine cases out of ten, to deal with the difficulty; that everybody should be only vain of other people's merits; and that nobody should say the same thing in the same words more than three times over in the course of the same day.

Oh yes, there are a great many things to be wished

for. By the way, I must tell you what a mistake I made lately, from an ignorance of these detestable genders. I am at a party. I step out upon the balcony with a distinguished foreigner. Lots of orders on his coat; an Austrian, I think.

There are few spots upon the earth where sunsets and moonlights are more effective, are indeed better got up, than in our metropolis.

The moon was resplendent, and brought out the river and adjacent buildings magnificently. I said to the distinguished foreigner, "How beautiful she is to-night!" "Yes," he said, "she, with her dark hair, did most become that yellow gown—what you call it? Yes, amber. She is very beautiful this night." Whereupon I discovered that he was speaking of our gracious hostess; and I began to surmise that the moon in his stupid language was masculine. The moon, a he! Let us have a conference of all nations, and come to some agreement about genders.

Make men more comfortable, you said! I should like to see you do it. Besides, you don't seem to be aware that one of their greatest pleasures is grumbling. If you were to make men as comfortable, according to your notions, as well-fed and well-styed swine, they (the men) would be intensely miserable from having less to grumble about.

Mr. Cranmer. How we are all shut up in our own small selves! I do really believe that Ellesmere would lose a

great deal of happiness if he had not a great deal to complain of; but the rest of us would decidedly prefer to be a little more comfortable than we are. I take no pleasure in grumbling.

Ellesmere. Mauleverer is silent: he is on my side.

Mr. Mauleverer. You are quite mistaken. I do not take much interest in what philanthropists can say to us, for I believe that it is so little they can do; but I don't see why they should not do that little—if they can—and it is always an amusement, if not a pleasure, to hear what they propose. There is generally so much folly in it.

Ellesmere. A very pretty idea, and handsomely expressed. I foresee a source of enjoyment which I had not reckoned upon—a very constant and up-welling source.

It was when we were in the punt that Milverton, dilating upon the splendid thing this river might be made, and the foul thing it is often made, informed us, with that modesty which is characteristic of all reformers, that he could make the world much more comfortable, if it would only give him the opportunity of doing so.

Sir Arthur Godolphin. He said nothing of the kind, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. No, no—not directly; but, according to that excellent phrase, "reading between the lines," one could see that that was what he meant. For my own

part, there is no garment in which audacity clothes or conceals itself that, to my taste, is so repugnant as the veil of mock-modesty. If Milverton would only honestly say that he believes he could immensely improve the world, I would get up early in the morning to attend him, would not interrupt his discourse, and would listen — proper intervals of sleep being allowed—until the weary sun, not wearier than myself, descended, in this flat land, into that waste of waters.

Mr. Milverton. I cannot accept this magnificent and encouraging offer upon the terms proposed; but if Ellesmere will only give me one patient hour in the day, not commencing at early dawn nor concluding with the setting sun, I will endeavour to instruct his obtuse mind as to some of the means which I should propose for making men more comfortable.

Ellesmere. We all know Sir Arthur's love of making an adjective very grand by putting the definite article before it. I have heard him talk of the Good, the Beautiful, the Becoming, the Decorous. Now let him make grand that commonplace word comfortable, by sticking that forcible article before it with a capital letter. Yes, we will discourse about The Comfortable, which in the spring-time of this climate, with its chill horrors, is about the last great abstraction that we should naturally think of. It is therefore most fitting to dilate upon on the present occasion.

The foregoing is a fragment of the conversation which led to the choice of subject that was at first adopted, but by no means adhered to, by the "Friends in Council," for this Easter.

CHAPTER II.

WE met next morning in the library; and as Mr. Milverton had told us that his first essay would not be short, and had deprecated all previous conversation, even Sir John Ellesmere was content to be silent, and the reading began at once.

TOWNS MAY BE TOO LARGE.

There have been three very shrewd people who have worn crowns, and who have ruled over this country, almost in succession,—namely, Henry VIII., Queen Elizabeth, and James I. In enumerating their merits, or their demerits, there is always much to be said on both sides of the question. But there is one branch of policy common to

all of them, and which each insisted upon strongly—namely, that their metropolis should be prevented, if possible, from becoming too large.

These monarchs liked to see their great people go back to their homes in their own counties, and always discouraged an increase of the population of London. This uniform feeling on their part might have had a purely political origin in their minds. Still we may give them the benefit of the doubt, and may conjecture that other considerations had weight with them, besides those connected with the distribution of political power.

Certainly one of the greatest evils of modern life, is the existence of great towns. Nobody who has not studied this subject can have an idea of what immense loss is caused by the excessive bigness of these great towns—loss of health, of time, of comfort, of material resources of every kind.

To take a very simple instance, the loss of animal power is enormous. Four or five

hundred horses are carried to the knacker's yard each week in London. It is probable that not more than about forty horses would be used up, if all the horses which do the work in London did similar work in smaller towns, where there would not be so much necessity for paved roadways.

It is not only to the lower animal life, but to the life of man, that the existence of those huge towns is disadvantageous. Everything is rendered more difficult by their enormous size, and by their want of concentration. Work is more difficult; and play (which is, after all, a great part of man's life) is far more difficult. It seems a small thing to say, but it is a most serious thing with regard to the happiness of mankind, that a busy man, in these great centres of population, cannot, after the toil of the day, take a walk into the country. Who can do so, for instance, in London, where, in several directions, there are ten continuous miles of houses?

Then as to the pleasures of society, these

are destroyed by the immense extent of this metropolis. Even the largest houses are not, relatively speaking, large enough for the town in which they are situated. The consequence is that society is, for the most part, a crowd; and it is impossible to be social in a crowd.

Then, again, the chief pleasure of society is in knowing something of the character and the peculiarities of those with whom you associate. This is impossible in huge towns, such as Paris or London. The result is, that half your time, your best time, your play time, is passed in the society of comparative strangers, with whom you have to make a sudden acquaintance as best you may. You meet a person, man or woman, with whom you are disposed to be sympathetic; but it is perhaps two years before you have the opportunity of meeting that person again. Hence your society is fragmentary, uncertain, and seldom becomes knit together by the bonds of frequent and familiar intercourse.

But, to turn to disadvantages which some may think of a more serious kind, to the waste which is occasioned in all matters of business by the immense extent of these centres of population. It is not too much to say that any matter of business takes nearly twice the time to be transacted in a large metropolis that it does in a small one.

Then, as regards questions of health. It was well said by one of the greatest sanitary reformers of this age, that, though London is a place where the rate of mortality is not exceedingly high, it is yet a place where nobody, except butchers' boys, enjoys perfect health—the full state of health that they are capable of enjoying.*

There is no doubt that when a number of human beings are crowded together, they will make great efforts to overcome the evils of this crowding, and their numbers

* This was said by Dr. Arnott, whose death we have now to deplore. His whole life was given to the service of his fellow-men. A truer reformer, in the best sense of the word, there never was.

aid them in these efforts. But the mischief always outstrips the remedy, which proceeds at a lagging and uncertain pace, while the former proceeds with the sureness and completeness of a law of nature. Besides, there are certain evils connected with the growth of great towns which are almost beyond the power of man, at any rate with his present knowledge, to conquer. The first article of food—namely, fresh air—is that which is least under the command of man. There is no danger of London being starved for want of animal food: there is more and more danger every year of its health being diminished from the want of a supply of fresh air.

It has been stated, I do not know with what truth, that every year the hospital surgeons in London find it more difficult to cure wounds and injuries of all kinds to the human body, on account, it is supposed, of the growing inferiority of the London air.

It is contended that the metropolitan railways afford a large means of daily exit

into fresh air for the London people. But this affects only a small part of the population, comparatively speaking. It is the thousands who go: it is the hundreds of thousands who remain. And this brings me to another very important branch of the subject. The fact of these thousands going away, makes it worse for the hundreds of thousands who remain. Those who have their homes out of London can hardly be expected to care much for their own neighbourhoods in London—the neighbourhoods of their places of business, not their homes. This feeling, too, affects the higher classes, who, when they are summoned to London for business or for pleasure, live in London, and do not patronize suburban dwellings. But they have little love for their neighbourhoods; and the moment that the course of business, or the dictate of fashion, enables them to escape from London, they lose no time in doing so.

Then, again, private and individual charity is rendered very difficult by the

immense size of the metropolis. The families of the rich and the powerful, when in the country, in their own neighbourhoods, have little difficulty, if they are charitably disposed, in learning all about their poor neighbours and really living amongst them. Every member of such a family (including the young ladies and even the children) can be of some service in the charitable enterprises of the family. And even in moderately-sized towns the same good work is feasible. But, except in rare instances, what prudent father or mother could allow young girls to go into the almost dangerous neighbourhoods of poor people which are close to the splendid mansions of the rich, not profiting much, however, by that select neighbourhood. Doubtless, the charities of London are vast; but, for the most part, they lack individuality, and rather resemble a tax than a charity.

Again, it may be said, with truth, that the individual in a huge city has little

power of protecting himself as regards some of the primary wants of life. For instance, he must take the water that is provided for his quarter of the town, whether he is satisfied with it or not. He cannot protect himself against adulteration of food. He has, in fact, become part of a huge machine, and has very little voice in, or influence upon, what goes on in the machine.

Then, as to pleasures. It is true that a great capital attracts great talent; and that better music is to be heard in a great capital than elsewhere. But this is a small compensation to be set off against the fact, alluded to before, that hundreds of thousands of people are so environed by houses that practically they never take a walk into the country. Strange and sad as it may seem, it was natural enough that a little London boy, born and bred in some hideous nest of alleys, should ask, as he did, whether the country was a large yard, his chief idea of air and space being that

they were to be found, in their utmost extent, in a yard.

Nothing can give one a better idea of the difference in the recreation to be obtained by the inhabitants of a small town compared with that which is to be obtained in a huge metropolis, than to observe what takes place in such towns as Dresden and Munich. There, on their holidays, the whole population flock out to some beautiful garden a mile or two from the town; hear good music; imbibe fresh air; and spend only a few pence in these humble but complete pleasures. Compare this with the amount of pleasure enjoyed by the head of a family, and mostly by him alone, at the neighbouring gin-palace round the corner, which furnishes his only idea of comfort and pleasure.

But let us pass, for a moment, from considering the life of men in these huge cities to that of the lower animals—horses, cows, and dogs.

I have already spoken of horses at the

commencement of this essay. A similar story may be told of the cows. They, too, are killed off prematurely, and do not last a third part of the time that they would last in the country or in a small town. We all know the pitiable condition of a dog that lives in London.

I proceed now to a consideration which concerns the inanimate world. That famous man, Count Rumford, used to estimate the number of millions of chaldrons of coals which were suspended in the atmosphere of London, and to dwell upon the mischief which was caused to furniture by this pall of smoke when it descended. But there are other special causes of injury, such as dust and chemical emanations of all kinds. The result is, that *everything* in such a city as London soon loses all bloom and freshness; and, indeed, is rapidly deteriorated. The more beautiful the thing, the more swift and fatal is this deterioration. I would venture to make a calculation as regards the injury of property

in London, caused not by reasonable wear and tear, but being the result of the agglomeration of too many people on one spot of ground. I should not think it would be less than three or four millions of pounds per annum.

There is another very subtle cause for this deterioration. It is in the hopelessness which gradually besets all people in a great town like London, of keeping anything clean. I was always very much touched by that story which some philosophic sanitary observer made known to the public, and which I have told you before. He noticed how a young woman, who had come from the country, and was living in some miserable court or alley, made for a time great efforts to keep that court or alley clean. But, gradually, day by day, the efforts of that poor woman were less and less vigorous, until in a few weeks she became accustomed to, and contented with, the state of squalor which surrounded her, and made no further efforts to remove it. We who live

in London are for the most part like that poor woman. A great many of us have come up from the country; and, at first, we partake her feelings as to the joy and beauty of cleanliness; but the atmosphere we live in is too strong for us. Who can resist the atmosphere! We gradually subside into living contentedly amidst dirt, and seeing our books, our pictures, our other works of art, and our furniture, become daily more dirty, dusty, and degenerate.

One point in reference to this matter I must especially dwell upon, and that is, the serious injury to buildings occasioned by this atmosphere. Certain kinds of architecture ought to be considered as impossible in London. All that is delicate and refined is so soon blurred, defaced, and corroded by this cruel atmosphere, that it is a mockery and a delusion to attempt fine work. There ought to be a peculiar kind of architecture for such a metropolis—large, coarse, and massive, owning neither delicacy nor

refinement, and not admitting minute decoration of any kind.

And, again, even that coarse work requires to be executed in the hardest material, otherwise the corrosion is so great as to cause the need for constant repair. And, while speaking of repairs and decorations, it must be known to every householder in London how frequent is the necessity for painting and for repairs, when compared with what is requisite where the atmosphere is less impure.

Now it is easy to state all these evils: it is very hard to find a remedy. Still, with such an ingenious creature as man, the remedy is seldom far off when the evil is known and thoroughly appreciated.

Ellesmere. Please stop here. I see from the bulkiness of that part of the manuscript which still remains unturned that you have a great deal more to read. The powers of the human mind are limited: at least, those of my mind are; and if you wish me only to give an inglorious assent to all you propound, you will exhaust that formidable manuscript. But if you wish for real criticism, you will have the goodness to pause.

Sir Arthur. Yes; I think, Milverton, you have given us enough food for discussion to-day.

Milverton. I am quite willing to stop, if only out of regard to the limits, according to his own confession, of Ellesmere's powers of mind.

Cranmer. The essayist is right, I think, and does not in the least exaggerate in what he has said about the hindrance to business arising simply from the great distances in large towns. A similar thought has occurred to me when I have been staying in some small foreign *residenz.* It seemed to me that, in the conduct of business, much less correspondence than is required *here*, would suffice to do the same work *there.*

Milverton. Certainly.

Ellesmere. I think, Milverton, that you would be assigning far too much foresight to the English sovereigns you spoke of at the beginning of your discourse, if you were to assume that any sanitary reasons formed even part of their fears lest their metropolis should become too large.

Sir Arthur. I don't know what they might have thought, but I am certain that we ought to think of the enormous evils which the vast increase of population in one spot may produce, and of the difficulty of guarding against them.

Milverton. I am quite convinced that foresight is the rarest thing in the world. Everything is against it; and, moreover, in the present hurried modes of life, in the

great pressure that there is upon statesmen, and all other men of business, there is less chance, than even in former days, of foresight being exercised.

And then the best things to be done are in the way of improvement, as I have often said; and there are these forbidding circumstances attending all improvement —that it mostly lacks originality; that it does not confer fame; that it cannot interest mankind as a new project does, however absurd and irrelevant that may be.

Sir Arthur. Yes: there is no book which tells of the achievements of the Improvers. They are, perhaps, the most useful men in their generation; and they pass from us unhonoured and even unheeded.

Milverton. There is the madness of believing that everything which is wanted to be done, can be done by what are called great measures.

Ellesmere. What a Conservative you are!

Milverton. I am the least conservative of mortal men. Only my mind always goes towards construction, or, at least, to amendment, rather than to destruction; and, therefore, by unobservant and shallow persons, such people as myself are always put down as Conservatives.

Ellesmere. I am so sorry to find that I am shallow. I rather supposed myself to be—

> "Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong, without rage, without o'erflowing, full."

In fact, exactly resembling the river that the poet was describing.

Milverton. The "great measure" man has one or two objects respecting which he bores on throughout the greater part of his life; whereas the things to be done in the way of improvement are multifarious and multitudinous. There is hardly any branch of human effort in which you cannot see that there are huge improvements to be made, and those, too, in the first requisites for decorous and beautiful living.

Ellesmere. I suppose that improvers are rare.

Milverton. No, they are not. What I mean to say is, that active improvers are rare; but that the men, who see what improvements might be made, and who desire that they should be made, are very numerous indeed. There is an immense deal of common sense in the world, and amongst all thoughtful men a great desire for improvement.

Ellesmere. Here we have a sudden change of position! How is it that all these common sensible people do not act with more effect?

Milverton. The reason is obvious. You seem to forget, Ellesmere, that we are living in an old country, and a very considerably law-ridden country, and where consequently it is difficult for individuals to do what they see ought to be done, and what they ardently desire should be done.

There is nothing like having a practical test of theoretical talk. Since you have taken this place, Ellesmere, I have travelled to and fro in the railway

several times. There is a portion of land that we pass by on this line. It is in a deplorable condition. Sometimes it is flooded. The roads near it are nearly lampless. It is altogether an unkempt place—a kind of "No-Man's Land." The neighbours lament this state of things, but do not see their way to altering it. There are crown-rights, there are common-rights, there is no municipality which can lay hold of this land; and, in short, it is almost undealable with.

Now something, not exactly of this kind, but of a similar kind, is observable throughout this country, and, probably, throughout any old country. What you want are enabling bills. In fact, what is needed is that legislation and administration should go hand-in-hand, instead of being dissevered, as they so often are. One is afraid to talk of French administration, because, in some respects, it is so very faulty, and so deficient in just freedom. But that state of things, which I have just described, would not long be suffered to exist in France. There the despotism of the french Préfet would come in well.

Sir Arthur. In this subject of the health of towns, building of all kinds naturally forms a prominent part. Now it is a remarkable fact, that architects and builders seem to have made less advance since the time of the Romans than any other class.

Ellesmere. Perhaps it is that the employer seldom knows, or at least seldom defines, what he wants.

Cranmer. There is also the system of leaseholds, which must be very prejudicial to good building.

Milverton. Then there is the diseased desire for uniformity. Everything must be made to correspond with something else.

"Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother."

There is but little harm in this as regards rustic groves and alleys; but the same practice is fatal to comfort when it is applied to building.

Then there is the great contracting builder, who has occasionally been a great evil in modern times. He has but one idea, and that idea is made successful by uniformity of design. For cheapness' sake he must have a thousand windows and a thousand doors made at his factory exactly alike; and he works upon the principle, or rather the instinct, of the lower creatures, who must have their nests or cells always of the same form and dimensions. Right enough for them, whose wants are ever much the same, but not for man with his ever-changing circumstances and his immense variety of craving.

Ellesmere. I observe that, hitherto, Mauleverer has not said a single word, good or bad, in our conversation; and I certainly did expect that he would break out when Milverton spoke of the abundance of common-sense in the world.

Mauleverer. It is useless to interrupt enthusiasts.

You do not seem to perceive the irruption of vulgarity, and consequently of stupidity, which has come upon mankind. The world has become a puffing, advertising, quack-adoring world. Its essence is of the shop, shoppy. Its main object is to buy something for three farthings and sell it for a penny. You can't expect anything great or chivalrous from such people. Milverton's rage against competition would cease if he once perceived that it is a necessary consequence of the vulgarity I speak of. You can't go against the Spirit of the Age—it is too strong for you. I am amused by your talk, but it is not worth while to interrupt it by offering the objections which stern facts would present.

Ellesmere. I will interpret Milverton's sigh. It was a sigh of surprise and vexation that anybody should indirectly laud past times so much—chivalrous times, when everybody persecuted everybody—when innumerable people were hanged for small offences; and when, to go further back, the world was filled by what may be called private wars. What though advertisements cumber and deface all railway stations; what though suburban houses, of a kind of architecture which can only be called suburban, are built, instead of grand cathedrals; what though flourishing tradesmen become the lords of the world; what though, as Mauleverer informed me in a walk yesterday, there is no fitting place now, in any part of the world, for a gentleman to live in

(he might have excepted Africa, I think), I still have the audacity to prefer the days in which we live, to those of any previous period.

Cranmer. Quite right for you, Ellesmere; for, as we have said before, you would have been beheaded, or burnt, in any of the choice periods of history.

Ellesmere. And what would have become of the rest of you? I don't know any man more certain to have been burnt, in what you call the good old times, than Milverton.

Milverton. I wish you would not go on with this vague and useless comparison of the present with the past. What I want to see is whether we could not make a better thing of the present and the future.

Now it seems to me that he would be the greatest man who, in this age, could find employment for the unemployed, who could make use of the enormous amount of unused faculty in the world.

Sir Arthur. Doubtless that would be a grand operation.

Mauleverer. Yes: to produce a host of busy-bodies.

Ellesmere. Nothing is more unwelcome, I know, than to show that a man is inconsistent. I am about to undertake that unpleasant function. Milverton spoke just now of the quantity of common-sense in the world; of the number of persons who would be improvers if only the old forms and usages of this law-ridden country——

Cranmer. There was the sting, "law-ridden."

Ellesmere. ——if the old forms and usages of this law-ridden country did not prevent these good people from doing this good work.

Now, if there is anybody who is dissatisfied with railway administration, Milverton is that person. He is always pointing out to me signal improvements that might be made in that kind of administration. Yet here are some of his common-sense people—some of the people who would do such marvellous things if there were Enabling Bills to enable them to do so, if they were not law-ridden.

Milverton. I am not in the least degree disconcerted. The choice of those people is made in the way that I have always protested against. It is made by interest and canvassing. Men who have some portion of that wondrous talent—the first in the world—namely, the talent of organization, are not found out in this way, any more than they are by competitive examination.

Ellesmere. Then how are we to know about these masters of mankind?

Milverton. There is but one mode, and that is by the appreciation of their fellow-men. I do not contend that this will always discover the right man; but it is the best mode that we have. And what I do contend for is, that human beings are, upon the whole, very good judges of other human beings. You see this, pre-eminently, amongst boys at school. The boy is not affected by any of those sinister influences which, in after manhood,

so fearfully interfere with his right choice of men to represent him and to act for him in every capacity. Looking back upon my early days, I can see that the boys were hardly ever wrong. They knew who was the boy who had firmness, or courage, or consistency, or capacity. Later on in life they submit to all those sinister influences to which I have alluded.

I believe that almost the greatest improvement we could desire for ourselves, and for our fellow-men, would be, that we should act in the choice of men with that exquisite sincerity and simplicity with which boys, and youths, designate those who should be pre-eminent amongst their fellows.

You taunt me, Ellesmere, with the choice that is made of railway directors. Do not suppose that very able men are not occasionally chosen; but, as the choice of the main body is made upon motives and influences which ought to have no weight in the choosing, the few fit men are apt to be overwhelmed and suppressed by their comrades. I think, Ellesmere, that I have answered your attack upon my consistency; but I will go further, and I must say that one of the drawbacks upon judicious progress in this present age, one of the main drawbacks, has been the submitting to almost mechanical means that great function of the choice of men by their fellow-men. In earlier days there was a most careful out-look maintained by eminent people in high position to discover and discern who, amongst the young, were the

right persons to be brought forward. The fact was most discernible in politics; but the principle upon which political choice was made, was dominant also in other regions of thought and action.

Sir Arthur. I quite agree with you, Milverton. I remember how I was trotted out, to use a horse dealer's expression, at Holland House.

Milverton. You see, Sir Arthur, the natural indolence of men favours the rise and progress of any system which should enable men to choose from among their fellow-men without the severe labour of watching and thinking. I knew of an instance in earlier days in which the most scrupulous attention was paid to ensure the good choice of men for an honorary distinction. The persons who might be considered as likely to be candidates were watched beforehand for months. Adventitious circumstances of all kinds, such as their wealth, their rank, their honours, or want of honours, at their universities, were studiously disregarded. The only object was to find out a really capable man—and those to whom the right of choice was confided generally found him. If I were to tell you whom they chose, you would admit that their power of choosing was somewhat surprising. That sort of earnestness and sincerity as regards the choice of men, if generally carried out, would prove, I am convinced, a greater advantage to the world than almost any other improvement that could be named.

Ellesmere. I should place great faith in the choice made by animals, who, like boys, seem to me to disregard all the baser influences. *I* never feed Fairy, but she always prefers walking out with me to going with anybody else. First dogs, then boys, then girls, then philosophers, though there is a vast interval between the sagacity of the last-named and that of the rest—these are the creatures to whom I should entrust the choice of men to fill the highest situations. So Fairy and I are going out together, the rest of you may come if you like.

Cranmer. Wait a minute. I know, Milverton, that you would thoroughly dislike any inaccuracy in any statement you might make. In your essay you said something about the increased difficulty of curing wounds in hospitals, and you attributed this difficulty to a continuous deterioration of the London air. Now I believe the fact is, that increased observation has led medical men to perceive that any agglomeration of sick persons has an injurious effect upon all of them, and tends to prevent rapid cure.

Milverton. I do not know whether you are right or wrong in this assertion; but, at any rate, I am very glad that you have made it. I accept it, for the moment, as a correction.

Mauleverer. All of you are prone to accuse me of silence during your discourse; and you assume that it is a malicious silence. I really cannot help differing from

you all intensely, and I feel that anything I say is thought to be unsympathetic, odd, irrelevant.

Ellesmere. Nevertheless, say on.

Mauleverer. I do not expect that you will agree with me in the least, but I contend that the main evil, which Milverton has been discussing, arises from those foolish inventions which you all think so much of, and upon which, indeed, you pride yourselves as much as if you had been the authors of them.

A shrewd man sees a kettle boil, and others adapt the thing called steam to locomotive purposes; and forthwith every fool goes everywhere, for what he calls his holidays, but which, indeed, are his most laborious days. Ultimately he sticks himself down in a place, where he finds the greatest number of people like himself. Hence these huge cities!

Another inventor screws light out of coals—so the people turn night into day, which is a very bad thing for them; and, moreover, it introduces a noxious element into their houses and theatres.

Another fellow contrives something which enables one to talk at once to another person, however distant he may be. Now the majority of human beings, I suppose you will own, are foolish. It is very undesirable that fools should communicate much and rapidly with one another. I am against all inventions but one.

Ellesmere. Let us hear what is that one.

Mauleverer. The invention of anæsthetics. I must own that this was a really useful invention. Every other has been noxious.

Sir Arthur. He is not so far wrong about the effects of rapid and easy locomotion. I suppose it has greatly aided in centralizing population.

Milverton. It is useless to attempt to answer such extravagance of statement, when it merely illustrates the commonplace remark, that nothing is wholly good.

Ellesmere. Then, I suppose, we may break up our conference, as it appears that nobody but Sir Arthur is at all willing to accept Mauleverer's proposition as the true solution of the difficulty. For my own part, I think that where one foolish person locates himself, another foolish person is sure to wish for such a neighbour, and to locate himself there too; but I do not lay all the blame of this upon inventors. Let us not, however, waste this fine day.

CHAPTER III.

OUR next meeting was again in the library. The benevolent owner of the house had left his book-cases open, to the great delight of the "Friends," and they were walking about the room examining the books.

Ellesmere. When one looks at another man's library, how sure one is to find lots of books that one had never even heard of. Now here is an early novel of Shelley's. After you went to bed last night, I read a great deal of it. It is one of the most absurd books that ever was written, full of stupid horrors—Mrs. Radcliffe run mad.

Sir Arthur. Except in the case of the greatest authors, you will almost always find that even an author of much and just renown has written, in his early days, something of stupendous absurdity.

Milverton. They are impressible creatures. They take the tone of some previous writer, and, having no

gift for that kind of writing, make an exaggerated copy of something which was originally bad; for good taste is a thing which comes by long cultivation.

Sir Arthur. This is evidently an old library, which has been formed by successive generations. I so much regret that the great book collectors (except in America) seem to be an extinct race.

Milverton. Ah! that is indeed a misfortune! Any one who has had to make historical researches knows of what use these collectors have been. They have preserved the most useful records, having, perhaps, themselves, no other motive for collecting but the appreciation of rarity and curiousness.

Sir Arthur. People do not love books now as they used to do.

Milverton. A great misfortune!

Cranmer. But what is the cause of it?

Milverton. I think I can tell you: the lending-libraries.

Ellesmere. I don't see the misfortune.

Milverton. I do. A man never gets so much good out of a book, as when he possesses it. This possession tends to accuracy. A man now tells you he has read something somewhere; but his knowledge of the so-called fact, if it be a fact, is very vague and uncertain. If you look at the side-notes in manuscript of some book possessed by our book-loving ancestors, you will be astonished at the quantity of accurate know-

ledge, and of the fitness of remark, which those notes disclose.

Ellesmere. But, my dear fellow, only think of the quantity of trash which that man would possess, who should buy every book that he reads in these days.

Milverton. I admit that; but, on the other hand, I think it is often a pity that men do not buy those books in which they have felt the least real interest. They are nearly sure to wish to refer to them again. The books are not at hand; and so the readers miss the attaining and securing some accurate knowledge.

Sir Arthur. In the estimation of collectors, crockery-ware seems now to have taken the place of books.

Milverton. If we are to take a walk this afternoon, I must ask you to sit down and hear at once what I have to say in that portion of the manuscript which you would not hear yesterday.

Previously, however, there is one point upon which I have to claim your indulgence. I have often spoken to you upon matters kindred to, or, at any rate, not distantly connected with, my subject for this Easter. You must not, therefore, be surprised if I occasionally repeat myself, and fortify my views by some fact which I have stated before.

There is a time of life when one is chiefly employed in acquiring facts: there is another time of life when one is chiefly employed in applying those facts. In my early days I was never satisfied without going to examine

the facts for myself. I have visited, unknown and unobserved, the most squalid and horrible portions of great towns, both here and abroad. I have practically made myself acquainted with drains and sewers of all kinds. I sometimes wonder that I am alive to tell the tale. I cannot carry on these investigations any more; and I only make this statement to you now, in order that you may forgive me, especially Ellesmere, for doing what I know he particularly dislikes—namely, making reference to the same fact, in the same words, which he has, perhaps, often heard me use before.

Mr. Milverton then read the following:—

Our remote ancestors had a keen idea of the evils of which we are speaking; and, in their rude way, did not fail to attempt remedies. There is a statute made by one of our earliest parliaments, of which I am sorry to say that I do not remember the whole substance and purport, but it begins in the following manner: "Si homme fait candells dens ung vill;" and it goes on afterwards to restrict as much as possible the man who makes "candells" from causing nuisance and mischief to his immediate neighbours.

There might, in modern times, be a good many acts of Parliament, having for their object one similar to that of the old Anglo-Norman act, the beginning of which I have quoted just now. They might also begin in the same charmingly abrupt way: "Si homme nourrit porcs, or vaches de milk, or vends oysters, he shall be bound to prevent his trade from becoming noxious to his neighbouring fellow-mortals."

Now it will astonish most of my hearers that I have included the vending of oysters amongst noxious trades; and what I am going to narrate will show how needful it is to watch carefully over even small transactions in human life, when these transactions take place amidst a great agglomeration of human beings. At a former time, when this country was threatened by an invasion of cholera, a committee of persons was formed, who were supposed to have some skill in sanitary science, to report to the Government of the day what measures should, in the opinion of this committee,

be adopted to prevent, or mitigate, the evils of this disease. I was one of those persons. Naturally we were glad to have evidence from the police of London, who know more of what goes on amongst the people than any other persons. We found that a most deadly fever had originated from the premises of one of the greatest vendors of oysters in the centre of the metropolis. Attached to his premises there was a large subterranean place where he deposited his oyster-shells. This place was connected with the sewers. The small portions of animal matter left in the under shells became putrescent; and, from the huge mass of them which had accumulated in that subterranean place, there finally arose a stench of the most horrible nature, which came up through all the neighbouring gratings, and most probably into some of the neighbouring houses. Many of the houses in London are so ill-provided with traps and other means of separation from the sewers, that, in certain states of the atmosphere, these

houses are but vertical portions of the horizontal sewers.

Now does not this one fact show what constant vigilance it requires to preserve the public health in a great city? It must be remembered, a fact I would impress upon my hearers, that, in a great city, everything has to be made outwardly decorous. And this, which seems at first so good a thing, is in reality an immense disadvantage. For the evil you see, you can guard against, or, at least, you know about it; but who, in a great city, knows the pitfalls, as it were, of disease which are in waiting for his finer senses, though not submitted to his eyesight? The danger from the accumulation of these oyster-shells was not known to myself, or even to any of my colleagues, versed as they were in sanitary matters. Of course I cannot prove that this fever was the result of this accumulation of shells, but I believe it was, and such was the belief of those persons who, at that time, investigated the matter.

Surely, it would not be too much to say

that, in the present time, restrictions should be made, similar to those which exist in the old act from which I have quoted, and which might exist in the acts I have imagined, that might gradually have the effect of removing all noxious trades from London and its immediate vicinity. I know that this might be thought to militate against what are called sound notions of political economy; and I say to you now, as I have said to you before, almost in the same words, that he would be a bold man who should venture to declare upon what subject of human thought and endeavour the greatest nonsense has been talked and written. I will, however, "hazard a wide solution," and boldly maintain that it is upon political economy that the greatest nonsense has been said and written. I know the potent claims of theology in this respect —of the great claims also of law, of medicine, of love, of art; but then these have been perennial subjects, whereas political economy is a creature of modern times;

and, considering the short period during which it has made a noise upon this earth, it must, I think, be confessed that more nonsense has been written and talked about it than about anything else.

Now the political economist has a great horror of what he calls "Paternal Government." He says this paternal government was all very well in former ages, barbarous ages, when men were few upon the face of the earth; but it has no claim to be here now. We have done with all that kind of thing. "That Supply will follow Demand," and "Let the buyer beware," are our maxims now. On the contrary, I venture to declare a maxim which I believe to be true, namely, that never is paternal government so needful, as when civilization is most advanced.

The more advanced the civilization, the less powerful is the individual, and the more he requires to have a careful father who should look after him and befriend him. He has become, as I intimated

before, a part of a machine; and there is great need that the regulator of the machine should be a living, acting, forcible creature, who should have a feeling for all the separate parts of the machine he regulates.

To drop all metaphor, does not a human being living in a great town like London, require that the State should fight his battle against a thousand opposing interests with more vigour and more prescience than when he is a powerful unit in a small community?

We have been considering what should prevent the ingress, into such great towns as London, of noxious trades, or facilitate their egress. This, however, is, of course, but a small part of the question. The main object is to see what can be done to render this vast agglomeration of animate and inanimate beings less embarrassing and injurious. The first thing that must occur to almost every mind is the necessity for preserving open spaces, and

even of creating them. A great philanthropist has lately astonished the world by giving it large sums of money during his lifetime.* The purposes to which he devoted that money are admirable. But perhaps even a larger and more beneficent purpose would be found in the creation of open spaces. London is often likened to Babylon; but the similitude is a very unjust one as regards the city of Nitocris and Semiramis, for Babylon had just what, in its densest parts, is deficient in London. We are told that Babylon contained within its walls land sufficient for agricultural purposes to enable the inhabitants of that city to be fed by those resources during a siege. We are also told that there were such breaks of continuity within the city, that, upon its being taken by Cyrus, the inhabitants of some parts of the city were not aware for several days of its having been

* This portion of the essay was prepared while Mr. Peabody, who was a dear and much valued friend of Mr. Milverton, was alive.

taken. Granted that these statements are exaggerations, it is still but fair to conjecture that Babylon was a city entirely different from London in the number and extent of its open spaces.

Damascus affords another instance of a great city, one of the oldest in the world, which, from the presence of large gardens within its boundaries, forms a most pleasing contrast to London and other modern cities.

Another evil of great towns is noise. There is the common proverb, that "half the world does not know how the other half lives," which perhaps would be a more effective saying, if the word *suffers* were substituted for 'lives.' It is probable that there is no form of human suffering which meets with less sympathy or regard from those who do not suffer from it, than the suffering caused by noise.

(*Ellesmere.* Hear, hear.)

The man of hard, well-strung, healthy

nerves can scarcely imagine the keen distress which men of sensitive nerves endure from ill-regulated noise—how they literally quiver and shiver under it. Now, of course, the larger the town, the more varied and the more abundant is the noise in it. Even the domestic noises are dreadful to the man of acute nervous sensibility. If he is a father of a family, he learns to bear with something like fortitude the practising of his own daughters on the piano; but it seems hard that he should have to hear the practising of his neighbours' daughters on that formidable instrument; and when, for the sixth time, he hears C flat instead of C sharp played in an adjacent house, he is very apt to be distracted from his work, and very much inclined to utter unbecoming language. This is but a single instance of the terrors and horrors of ill-regulated noise; but in a huge town such as London or Paris, similar noises abound of a multifarious description. It has always greatly surprised me that so much intellectual work

is done so well as it is done in these huge cities.

An answer, apparently a ready answer, can be made to this remark by any one, if such a one there be, who cares to defend these large masses of population. He would say, "The evil you complain of is not confined to *great* towns; but exists in all towns." Yes, I reply, to a certain extent; but not in such multifarious and oppressive variety; nor even with such intensity; for it may be observed that in these very large towns building is of a very rapid growth, and is less substantial than elsewhere.

This brings me to another branch of the subject, and a very important one. In these great towns, as it has before been intimated, there are very few homes for those of the richer classes. In fact, almost all their houses must be looked upon, to a certain degree, as offices—offices for pleasure, if not for business. Consequently, hardly any inhabitant of these very great

towns has cared to build, or, even if he has cared, has been able to build, a house as if it were to be his home. We are all living in London somewhat like soldiers in tents, or like Eastern travellers in caravanserais. It was a shrewd remark of a very shrewd man,* that if, for a short time, on account of foreign occupation or some other cause, London were to be abandoned by its population, it would fall during that time into a state of ruin which would astonish the world. This unsubstantiality tends very much to aggravate many of the evils we have been considering; and it is consequent upon the largeness, the unwieldiness, and the temporary nature of habitation in these great centres of population.

The worst and most disheartening point with regard to providing remedies for the improvement of great modern towns is this—namely, that the course of modern

* Sir Henry Taylor.

thought and modern life is set against these improvements. The tendency is more and more to promote individual effort with a view to individual comfort and individual wealth. It was not always so, or, at least, not always so to the same extent. The existence of great cathedrals is a proof of this statement. These cathedrals are, according to our modern notions, greatly disproportionate to the houses and the mode of life generally of those pious men who erected such cathedrals. It is evident that, in their time, the efforts to be made for some great public purpose, were held to be of the first necessity; and we can hardly doubt that if those great men of the olden time had possessed the sanitary and scientific knowledge which we possess in these days, they would have found time, money, and labour to provide for the great requisites of life when numbers of persons are living together in close community.

When they did perceive that such things were requisite, we have reason to believe

that they did not hesitate to embark in the greatest undertakings. For instance, the embankment of the Thames, a work of the greatest magnitude, was undertaken at such an early period of English or British history, that no historical records remain of this great transaction. We can only discern that it has been done: we cannot say when, or by whom, it was done.

Now there are many persons who will at once say that it is Utopian and chimerical even to hope that a change may come over the spirit of our dream as to what should be some of the first objects in life. We think, conceited creatures as we are, that there is no life that can be lived so skilful and judicious, and, above all, so comfortable, as that which our present modes of thought render almost inevitable. I really believe that there are many amongst us who think that if, amidst the myriads of planets with which the universe is probably peopled, there is one which, in its physical history and circumstances, closely resembles our

own, things must have gone on in that planet much as they have in ours; and that, at a period in its history corresponding to the present one in ours, its inhabitants will have come to the conclusion that effort for the individual is everything, and for the State nothing.

But I venture to imagine that it is not so. And, even in this planet, should there come again a great soul, one of those beings who makes his appearance about once in a thousand years, he might propound ideas which should shiver into atoms some of our present most potent ideas; and, especially with reference to this subject, might convince the world that the first thing to be done when any great number of people are congregated, or are to be congregated, in any one spot, is that provision should be made, both at the outset, and also by continuous and consecutive effort, for those great requisites, without which in great towns the life of man will always be barbarous, squalid, and most unsatisfactory.

It is to be noticed that our present ideas of life do not furnish the means of enabling us to construct great cities (even when we have the beginning of the work in our own hands) with the primary requisites for health, beauty, comfort, and grandeur. As a proof of this, I may cite such a town as New York, in which we are told that disease and squalid misery of all kinds are as abundant, and, for the most part, as unchecked, as they ever were, or are, in any of the great towns of the Old World.

I will now say something to which I especially entreat attention, because I think it goes to the root of the matter. Why do men desire individual prosperity so much? It is seldom for themselves. The founders of great fortunes and great families are mostly men of very simple habits, and with very little inclination for expense. In fact, they have had no time or thought to spare for indulging in expense. Expensive habits occupy time. Now, why is it that these men, and, indeed, almost all working men

in modern communities, are anxious to accumulate fortunes? It is for their children. And why do they desire it so intensely for their children? It is not always because they wish to make those children eminent among the sons of men. If they were probed as to their motives, they would probably confess to you that they think their own career has been a beautiful and becoming career—a career of continuous labour, and of continuous command. In their "heart of heart" (that is the proper way of making the quotation) they would desire such a career for those who come after them. But they see, and have generally experienced, the hideous difficulty and squalidity which beset those who are placed low down in the world, and they say to themselves, "We cannot afford to work much for the public: we must provide for those who are our issue." For example, and to bring this point home to the present subject, they know the degradations and the horrors which beset the poor in great towns. They

know the immense difficulty that it is for any human being, without capital, to ensure himself a living; and, naturally enough, they direct all, or the greatest part of, their efforts to insure a most favourable standpoint for their children.

But now, for a moment, exercise your imagination, and conceive, if you can, a better state of things pervading human life. Imagine that there were no such depths of degradation as are to be found in great cities. Every improvement that is made in this respect would diminish, if but slightly, the wild desire that men at present have, to devote themselves to family interests.

The foregoing must not be confounded with purely communistic theories. All I contend for is this, that if we could raise the scale of comfort in the humblest portion of the community—if, for instance, we could prevent the extreme squalidity of great towns—we should diminish the excessive anxiety which parents at present feel to provide good positions for their

children, and should divert a little of that energy, which now is given often exclusively to private and family interests, to the public welfare. And when we consider over what a large area of thought and labour this impulse would act, it might give us a hope of many things being done for the public, which now it is Utopian to imagine.

To return for a moment to much smaller questions, there are many modes of rendering modern towns more beautiful and comfortable than they have ever been, which have, hitherto, been totally neglected. For example, we live in a very rainy and a very capricious climate. Often, for the sick, the delicate, and even for the strong, it is almost impossible to take much exercise for many days in the course of the year. I have often thought that in various quarters of the town there should be raised buildings partially covered in, which should enable those in the neighbourhood to take exercise with freedom both from bitter winds and driving rains—

in fact, an elevated kind of cloister. To this good design I would venture to add, that some amusement and recreation might be provided—especially of a musical kind. Such a proposal is just one of those things which admits of great ridicule until it has been carried into effect. And, then, perhaps, everybody would acknowledge its merits. It would probably counteract the attractions even of the gin-palace, which, I think you will admit, gives the least amount of enjoyment for the amount of money spent in it, of any form of enjoyment which has ever been devised. My hearers will estimate the force of this statement, when it is remembered that there are not even seats provided for the frequenters of gin-palaces. They stare at unmeaning ornament, swallow their modicum of liquor, and depart. Now one of the first objects in providing such refreshments, should be to make them occupy some time. If not, the drinkers return, perhaps quickly, for more.

In reviewing this essay, I feel that there are many topics which have not been touched upon at all, and others which have only been slightly noticed. For example, the state of crime, and the facilities afforded for crime, in these huge modern cities, have not been touched upon. Moreover, the political aspect of the subject has not been approached. Yet it is a very sad thing to consider, that such is the construction of our cities, that men cannot meet together to protest against any political grievance, real or imaginary, but there is danger of riot or revolution, or at least of enormous disturbance to the quiet and peaceful inhabitants of the city who have nothing to protest against. Instead of discountenancing such political manifestations, or allowing them to proceed to the great annoyance and hindrance of those who do not feel the so-called political grievance, it should be provided in a free country, and especially in the metropolis of that country, that its citizens should be

able to make what the Spaniards call a *Pronunciamiento*, without any risk of disturbing the public peace, or of impeding the ordinary pursuits of those who do not wish to join in the *Pronunciamiento*.

Ellesmere. I am very sorry to say, as I have said before, that there is one great defect in human nature—namely, that the power of attention in any human mind is a limited quantity. At any rate, it is so with me; and so, after listening to an essay which has lasted half an hour in delivery, and which has treated of at least a dozen difficult subjects, I am dumb from sheer exhaustion of mind. I propose, therefore, that we should postpone any remarks we have to make upon this essay until after dinner.

Sir John's proposal was readily agreed to; and we then separated until dinner-time.

CHAPTER IV.

IN the course of that evening Mr. Milverton asked us whether we had any remarks to make upon his essay; and the conversation thus began.

Sir Arthur. Certainly, it is a most serious matter for consideration, this increase of towns. I declare I think it is one of the most serious in the world. I never thought of it so before. Indeed, I am ashamed to say that I have sometimes taken a jesting view of it, and have amused myself by prophesying, as we drove into town, how this ugly lot of suburbs would join with that ugly lot, and that there would soon be one continuous street.

Ellesmere. What is one to say about it? One likes to make a sensible remark if one can, but I find nothing in the way of remedy. Free men must build where they like, and where they find it an advantage to build. Business always tends to centralize itself.

Doctors herd with doctors, lawyers with lawyers, merchants with merchants; and they choose the same grazing-ground.

Milverton. Then you see everything in modern times tends to a certain fixedness of place. In the days of the Plantagenets, all the functionaries of government were more errant, including the king and his court and all his high officers.

Cranmer. Do any of you remember a very elaborate clause which there used to be in all old leases, and in which were to be found such words as "lights, easements, privileges," and the like? There were a whole host of such words. Now admitting, as we must perforce admit, that the main part of the evil must go on increasing, it is only in partial remedies that I see any chance of our mitigating it.

Milverton. That is exactly what I intended to convey to you.

Sir Arthur. People fash themselves about such dim and distant dangers as the supply of coal failing us; but I see now that this rapid increase of great towns is a much more pressing cause for apprehension.

Milverton. To return to Cranmer's "lights, easements, and privileges," I never see a foot of ground encroached upon that might be, and ought to be, kept as an open space for public purposes, but it makes my heart ache for future times.

Sir Arthur. Forethought is what is wanted.

Milverton. I always think it a cruel thing for the future population of this country when any crown land is let for building purposes. That land should be held by the public for the public, due compensation being made to the Crown for this disadvantageous use—disadvantageous in a pecuniary sense—of its property.

I wonder if any benevolent and foreseeing man had long ago bought and dedicated to the public a vacant space of ground in the midst of, or near to, a great town, and had bequeathed money to maintain this vacant space in due neatness and order, whether his bequest would have been maintained intact. I fear not. The Church, or the Sovereign, or that department in the State which had to deal with education, or Commissioners of some kind or other, would have been nearly sure to seize upon this wise bequest, and to devote it to alien purposes. Yet it may be fairly questioned, whether any use that could be made of it, such as a church, a palace, or a school, being built upon it, could have equalled in real utility, and in the benefit to be conferred upon mankind, that of leaving the open space alone, and so making the most of it, though indirectly, for the high purposes of health, education, or religion. The future would have been nearly certain to be sacrificed to the present; for the spoliators (such I must call them) would probably be deficient in those powers of imagination which, if duly exercised, would teach men that one of the grandest objects of benevo-

lence, is to provide for the future these vacant spaces in the midst of, or neighbouring to, the great centres of population.

Ellesmere. I never was familiar with this part of the country before I took this house. Since I have been here I have perambulated the whole locality; and an idea has come into my mind of which I think our essayist will thoroughly approve. By the way, Milverton, who manages all the Crown property about here?

Milverton. The Woods and Forests.

Ellesmere. Then I wish I were a lord of the Woods and Forests, and I will tell you what I would do. Do you know that ground between Kew Gardens and the town of Richmond?

Sir Arthur. Yes.

Ellesmere. I believe it is about 800 acres in extent. I should seize upon that, and use it at once for public purposes. It would be a very good thing to enlarge Kew Gardens: those gardens are an immense delight to the public. Among other things, I want a great vegetable garden to be made. You have your orchids, and your palms, and your ferns. I do not grudge them their space. You have, too, your "hardy medicinals," a most useful and instructive collection, but I think that my imagined vegetable garden would be even more useful.

Milverton. I am quite with you, and I am very glad, Ellesmere, that you look at the matter so seriously.

Ellesmere. I have still much larger and more audacious ideas. I want part of that ground for a recreation ground for the people. You must not think me vulgar; but where I have my recreation ground, it must be recreation in every sense of the word. The people must be fed as well as amused.

Cranmer. You don't mean to feed them, Ellesmere, at the public expense?

Ellesmere. Pray don't be so utterly prosaic; of course, I only mean that they should have the means of providing food for themselves. This cannot be done in the exquisitely-kept gardens of Kew, but might be done in the ground outside it. Then there should be music.

I believe that even the philosophers and grand botanists who come to delight in, and be instructed by, the plants at Kew, would often wander off to my part of the added grounds, to refresh their "wearied virtue." I have observed that philosophers have generally good appetites. Those who work their brains are mostly of the cormorant species, else they would shrivel up, and degenerate into ordinary mortals.

But now come with me, and let us look at the ground.

I declare that, if I could afford it, I would rent that ground from the Woods and Forests, and lay it out on my own account. But see, wonders will never cease. Milverton is getting his hat to come with us. When that man has an object, it is astonishing what ambulatory powers he can develop. Merely to enjoy the pleasure

of our society, he wouldn't walk half a mile. But come along, and let us step out. The ladies will come with us, too, for when there is anything like festivity, if it is only to be imagined, they are sure to be to the fore.

We were all pleased at the project of this excursion, as Mr. Milverton called it; and, boldly trespassing, spent a very pleasant afternoon in those grounds which Sir John had described, and which we peopled in our imagination with groups of happy holiday-makers, who, according to Sir John Ellesmere, were to be "well-fed, well-danced, and to enjoy themselves in every way."

CHAPTER V.

IT may have been noticed that in the course of the previous conversations, Sir John Ellesmere has not been quite like his usual self. He has taken fewer exceptions than he was wont to take, has viewed the matter in hand more gravely; and, to speak with plainness, has been less tiresome, as a disputant, than he was wont to be.

The cause, I believe, of this change, is that Lady Ellesmere has, of late, been ailing. It seems strange to me that this should alter a man's views and modes of expression; but I suppose I have never been in love, and cannot tell what it is, to be dependent, intellectually speaking, upon the health or happiness of some other

person. However, so it was with Sir John. But to-day, in his walk, accompanied by Mr. Cranmer, Mr. Mauleverer, and myself, he seemed to resume a great deal of his former gaiety of heart and perverseness of opposition. Lady Ellesmere was better.

It is almost impossible to narrate, accurately, vague and varied talk. But one remembers those portions of it which are clear and distinct; and where the subject matter is interesting. I cannot tell how we came to the point at which Sir John began to describe a character which he lauded highly; but I will now give his own words.

Ellesmere. I mean, you know, the man who looks up to himself.

Cranmer. An egotistical fellow!

Ellesmere. No, Cranmer, that is exactly what I do *not* mean. An "egotistical fellow," as you call him, is not thoroughly assured about himself. He presses forward with his "I, I, I," simply because, perhaps unjustly, you do not recognise that "I" sufficiently. But my man, who looks up to himself, is a fellow who values

his own opinions extremely—not because they are his opinions, but because they are portions of the truth, as he deems them to be, and because he has formed them with much care and labour. It is, intellectually, that he looks up to himself.

Mauleverer. There is a mysterious and indomitable pride for which it is very difficult to assign the origin. It is not the pride of birth, or rank, or riches, or beauty, or intellect. The persons in question, who are thus proud, would scout the idea, and with justice, of their priding themselves upon any of these qualifications. The truth is, they are proud of their pride, and nothing more can be said about it. They evidently think it is a fine thing to *be* proud.

Ellesmere. No, I do not mean anything of this kind. My man, who looks up to himself, may not be a proud man in any way. I must explain further. You often read about and hear of people who have wonderful influence in their own circles. You may be nearly sure that they are men of the kind I mean. People talk of the force of character, generally meaning something moral; but I do not believe that what is moral in this case, has so much weight as what is intellectual. Of course there is high morality, to begin with, in the desire for truth; but many men desire truth who take but little pains to attain it. Now observe our friend S—— (here he named a man well known in the world), you all respect him; you all like to hear what he has to

say upon any given subject. It is not a respect for his morality. I am sure I don't know whether he is a moral man or not; but you feel intuitively that he has thought upon what he talks about; that his are no casual remarks; and the man's words carry weight. You can see, too, that he looks up to himself; that he has great respect for his own intellectual convictions. Such men rule the world.

Cranmer. And deserve to do so.

Ellesmere. Such women, too. I have often wondered at the singular influence possessed by some women; and I have always found that they were women who looked up to themselves—not necessarily brilliant persons, not necessarily witty, but original (of course, a person is original who takes great pains to form his or her convictions); and then, as most women are very sympathetic, this combination of originality and sympathy makes them the most charming companions—more charming, of course, than men of the like self-respecting nature, because such men may not be sympathetic, whereas the women are nearly sure to be so. You may depend upon it, that Cleopatra not only sympathized with Anthony, but had ideas and views of her own which greatly interested and attracted him. And so with the great ladies in France who ruled certain sections of society. You may take it for granted that they were women who looked up to themselves. We have had fewer of such women in

England—that is, ostensibly; but you will find that in most circles, even in remote country places, there are women of the kind I mean, who have immense power in the form of influence.

Johnson. I wish that Mr. Milverton had been with us. I think he would have agreed with all you have said.

Cranmer. Then Ellesmere would have differed from him.

Ellesmere. I wish that we could get Milverton to treat us occasionally with some other subject than this Health of Towns business. I do not mean to say that the questions he raises, such as the limits of legislation and administration—the projects he has for beautifying towns, for enlivening town populations, and for making all official people wise, prudent, and energetic—are not exceedingly interesting to the graver personages of our circle; but I am a frivolous individual, and would sometimes like that humbler topics should come before us. I can't write essays myself, but I flatter myself I am "a dab," as we used to say at Eton, at suggesting subjects for essays. I would rather, however, hear what the rest of you would suggest.

Cranmer. What should you say to this—"An Essay on the Meanness and Thoughtlessness of the very Rich"?

Ellesmere. I can only say that if Milverton or you were to write such an essay, I would write a counterpart

on the "Liberality and Thoughtfulness of the Rich." The rich are often very hardly treated.

Mauleverer. I should suggest an essay "On the Folly of Mankind"—as to whether it is greater or less for any given generation. I believe it to be a constant quantity.

Ellesmere. I don't. I believe that the philosophers of each age are equally foolish; but that the common people gradually increase in wisdom. I think I should rather astonish you if I were to show, as I think I could, that there are theories broached now by those who are called clever men, which rival in folly the dreams of the philosophers of Laputa; but I think that my grocer of to-day takes a wiser view, at any rate, of the affairs of his own country, than my grandfather's grocer did in the days of George III. If not, the public press has been of little service to mankind.

Cranmer. I do believe you are right as regards your grocer, though totally wrong as regards your philosophers. You really, Ellesmere, do not know enough about science, to pronounce against scientific men.

Ellesmere. It is always a feather in my cap when Cranmer condescends to approve of any part of anything I say. I was not thinking of scientific men, when I spoke of philosophers.

Cranmer. You should be more precise then, in defining what you mean—especially when you are attacking any class of people.

Mauleverer. I should like to have an essay on the evils of "Over-publicity," whence it comes that there is nothing left now which is really private.

Ellesmere. I should like to have an essay on the "Art of Leaving Off."

Cranmer. And I upon "Intrusiveness."

Johnson. I am afraid you will all laugh at me. I should like to have an essay on "What to Read, and How to Read it."

Ellesmere. My dear Sandy, nobody is disposed to laugh. Your subject is a very good one, only it is so brutally big. We should never have done with it. I tell you, though, who could write such an essay admirably, if any one could, and that is Sir Arthur.

Now those two idle men we have left behind us, Milverton and Sir Arthur,—what a ludicrous contrast there is between their ways of study, though they are both of them book-worms.

Cranmer. That is not a nice way of describing one's friends.

Ellesmere. There is some truth in it though. I will bet they are reading now. They will have paid due attention to the ladies; have meandered about the flower-garden in a listless way; have said fine things about the shadows on the water; and then they will have gone to their books. But mark the difference. It is quite uncertain whether Milverton will be reading a treatise on the Differential Calculus,—the Blue-book on the Bengal

Famine,—a very sensational novel, perhaps French,—a lively treatise on egg-shaped drains,—a German grammar, —"Watson's Theological Tracts,"—or, perhaps, the Koran. You laugh, but you know that my description is not the least exaggerated. No person on earth could make a tolerably accurate guess as to what that man is puzzling or refreshing his brains over.

Johnson. You have not succeeded, Sir John; for I happen to know what he is most likely reading, as he asked me to get him the book, and it was a history of the gypsies, with some account of their language—a work which he was delighted to find in that old library.

Ellesmere. I told you no one could guess what he would be at. Now look at the other. It will be no accidental thing that he will be reading. You wouldn't catch him over a sensational novel; whereas, when Milverton is weary of his gypsies, he will probably be found reading something of Dumas'. Sir Arthur, on the contrary, will have a steady purpose. It will be some branch of history that he will be mastering, or some class of high poetry. It will be continuous, purposeful; and he is the man whom we will persuade to write that essay. Nobody will have the energy to follow his directions, but that does not matter. We shall hear what we ought to do, and shall have the pleasure and the satisfaction of neglecting to do it.

"Gentlemen," as my tutor at Trinity used to say, "I

shall expect that, by Wednesday next (it being then Friday) you will, by yourselves, have gone through the first three chapters of 'Whewell's Mechanics.' I shall then be ready to explain any little difficulties that may have occurred to you in the course of your reading." Upon which, having three clear days to spare, we incontinently went out boating, or cricketing, the dark background of neglected duty, indicated by Whewell's first three chapters on Mechanics, bringing out into bolder relief of light and joy, the boating or the cricketing.

Hence it is that I am an athlete, and can vault over that gate, where none of you dare follow me. By the way, isn't it good to hear Milverton cry up the virtue of athletic sports as he sometimes does—a man who could not, or would not, leap over a turtle? What an insight it gives us into a man, when we know his private hatreds. It is not that Milverton loves athletics, but that he hates furious competition in intellectual sports, which competition he takes to be mischievous as regards the choice of official men; and so his darling government is injured: for that man would like us all to be well-ruled—is a despotic animal, with the claws sheathed, not pared. Yes, yes, he is, Sandy; you may protest as much as you like; and, of course, it is your duty to protest, as a faithful private secretary. Private secretaries always imbibe the hue of their master's mind, and even darken it; mean minister, meaner private secretary; despotic minister, more despotic under private secretary. Sandy

would have us all hanged upon those high elms; me for daring to say what I have said, you for daring to listen to it, and Fairy for not biting my legs when her master's character was truly drawn by me.

I am not sure of that, though; I mean about Fairy. Whatever character you were to give a dog's master, prove him to be thief, scoundrel, blackguard, glutton—the faithful dog, knowing it to be true, would still admire and love his master not one whit the less; and therefore would not care to bite one's legs for telling the truth about his master. Dogs, women, and cockatoos—I have known very affectionate cockatoos—are the only creatures whose love is worth having, who are somewhat indifferent to all our other moral qualities, so long as we are true and kind to them.

Mauleverer. By the way, Ellesmere, do animals appreciate those persons who look up to themselves?

Ellesmere. Yes, certainly; for such persons are apt to be decisive, and animals have a singular appreciation of decisiveness.

I do not remember any more of this conversation; but it will be seen, as I said before, that Sir John had regained, for the moment, some of his usual vivacity, and his fondness for attack.

CHAPTER VI.

WE were in a boat, on a beautiful evening, gliding down the river, and some of us enjoying both the motion and the scene greatly. But there were others who did not partake our enjoyment. Mr. Milverton, having been once upset in this river, has taken an aversion to boating; and Sir John Ellesmere never could abide it. He says it has every disadvantage that can be thought of. You can't move about; and, to such a restless being, that must be very painful. You are exposed, he says, to all the vicissitudes of a capricious climate. You are rained upon, or fiercely shone upon, tortured by cold or worried by heat, without the power of protecting yourself that you have on dry land. He

becomes quite eloquent in his terms of disapproval. You are either, he says, a slave at the oar, or a serf at the tiller, abused by everybody, however judicious your steering may be (he had once, as a steerer, put us upon a sandbank, from which it had cost us great labour to get off), or you are in the degraded position of a sitter, and are promptly ordered not to lean too much on this side, not to sway over too much on that, not to put your hand in the water, if you please, and not to crane forward to look at anything which may be worth looking at.

Still, the ladies liking it, and the rest of the gentlemen being on their side of the question, Sir John and Mr. Milverton prefer being with us, to being left alone at home.

We had talked of all manner of things, but in a charmingly desultory way. We had spoken of love: how it is the oddest thing in the world in this strangest of worlds. We spoke of that extraordinary book of

Hazlitt's, the "Liber Amóris," and Sir Arthur told us of a similar case, how he knew of a man, one of the first men in this age, who was in love with a girl who had no merits whatever that he could perceive. She was rather plain, she had no accomplishments, she had no powers of conversation, at least, that he could discover, she had no social merits, if merits they can be considered to be, for she had neither riches nor rank, nor high birth, nor pleasant relations, nor anything on earth to recommend her. Yet the great man doted upon her.

Then Mr. Milverton spoke.

Milverton. Now I, for one, believe that man to be fully justified in his liking. I don't think he is the fool that you suspect him to be. Character is a thing which has deeper indents in it than are made by any of the adventitious circumstances that you have adduced. A woman, or a man, shall have no beauty, no grace, no knowledge (what you call knowledge), no accomplishments, and yet shall be a profoundly lovable being. Now imagine that this man, whom you have all been

rather sneering at, should have an almost wild love of truthfulness and sincerity. My dears (here he addressed the ladies), the word sincerity alludes to the waxen tablets of the Romans—to the tablets of metal, or other substance, before the wax was put upon them. All these fine things, these accomplishments, this knowledge, that power of talk which you all estimate so highly,—

Ellesmere. Just as if he did not too.

Milverton. —are mere surface things. The essential points of character may be in the metal underlying the wax.

Upon that ductile upper substance anything can be written. I believe in the insight of the great man of whom we have been talking, and that he has recognised in this somewhat plain girl, a character that was essentially at one with his.

Ellesmere. It is probably an entire delusion.

Milverton. I don't care about that. The delusion is as good as the reality. I am accounting for the man's love—not for its rationality, not for its freedom from error.

Mauleverer. You can never upset Milverton.

Ellesmere. Except from a boat.

Mauleverer. But what I mean is, that if you conquer him in argument about a reality, he flies off to imagination.

Ellesmere. Yes, he is a subtle scoundrel: that I

entirely admit. I have conquered him in a thousand arguments; but to other people, especially if some of them have been women, he has appeared to have the best of it.

Milverton. Don't let us talk about love; it is a subject we shall never agree upon. I want to ask you all a favour. I feel that my lucubrations upon serious subjects are often a bore to you, but I want you to give me one more hearing, and it shall be only one. You think, I know, that my mind is too fixedly set upon official matters, upon government, sanitary reform, and the like. I should wish to give you one more essay upon the immense advantages that may be derived from wise official management. You think, I know you do, that subjects like these do not much concern you. I propose to show you, by one or two remarkable instances, how profoundly your individual interests are concerned in good government, and in the management of official details, which you think it is mere official pedantry for me to harp upon so much as I do. After I have inflicted upon you this final essay, you may go into whatever subjects you please. You may discuss the conduct of the rich to the poor, or of the poor to the rich. You may deal with the great question of co-operative industry, respecting which I see that our friend Brassey has been delivering an admirable lecture; or you may discuss the never-to-be-exhausted questions of love and friendship; the rights of

women, and the wrongs of men; cruelty to animals, or whatever you may be pleased to select.

Ellesmere. Let us take him at his word. When I was a boy at school, and we had to clear from the plates whatever was put before us, I used to eat the nauseous bits first, or, if I could, put them in my pocket, and then I could manage the rest.

Lady Ellesmere. What an unsavoury metaphor, John!

Ellesmere. It is the same thing, my dear, with the honeymoon. We have to get through that first, and then the rest is comparatively easy.

Sir Arthur. I accept Ellesmere's simile; but it leads me to a conclusion different from his. I am more interested in Milverton's subject than in any of those which I heard that you proposed in your walk the other day.

Ellesmere. How far politeness will carry some people! Good manners are the most powerful creatures in the world. A man will do for the sake of good manners what he will hardly do for torture.

Sir Arthur. You have not heard my proposition. It is to keep Milverton's essay as a *bonne bouche* for the last.

Ellesmere. Oh, the sly dog!

Sir Arthur. And to have your vague essays now.

Milverton. I should not be sorry to have the matter settled in this way. It will give me and Johnson more time to prepare.

Ellesmere. Well, then, who is to be the first victim? I vote that it should be Mauleverer. It appears to me that his proposed essay on "Intrusiveness" would come in well now.

Cranmer. No: I proposed that subject; but I will gladly yield to Mr. Mauleverer.

After a good deal of persuasion, Mr. Mauleverer was at last induced to promise that he would favour us with his thoughts upon Intrusiveness; and then, to the delight of Sir John and Mr. Milverton, the time had come for our landing at a very muddy bank of this, the most renowned of rivers. As we were landing, Ellesmere urged upon us all to be very serious. "A laugh might upset you all. It was at this very point that Milverton was upset in his outrigger, though he would have you believe that it was in the deepest of deep waters. A boat is a delightful thing—to get out of."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. MAULEVERER was not long in preparing his essay, and, indeed, informed us the next morning that he was ready to read to us what he had written. I will give his own words.

Mauleverer. You must not expect a long discourse. The subject does not admit of it. And you must not expect fine writing. I go straight to the point, and do not want similes and metaphors to back me up. All padding is an abomination to me.

Ellesmere. I hate long-windedness as much as you do, Mauleverer; but I cannot call good similes and metaphors padding. When I introduced that simile about the way in which, as a boy, I used to manage with my dinner, everybody, except my lady, felt that it was a valuable simile; and, in truth, it was the cause of your being brought forward on the present occasion.

Mauleverer. If you must have similes, I will give you

one which will show how desirable it is that I should begin to read my essay at once. Have you ever been at a public dinner?

Ellesmere. Yes: to my sorrow, many times.

Mauleverer. Have you observed how wretched that poor man is, who has to make the speech of the evening, until he has made it? Others can eat a good dinner: he cannot. So, no more desultory talk until I have read the essay of the morning. Thinking about it has spoilt my breakfast.

Hereupon Mr. Mauleverer read the following essay:—

INTRUSIVENESS.

At present there are at least eight millions of people in these Islands, and elsewhere, who can write a letter in the English language, and half of whom, at least, have the courage to write that letter. When the benevolent schemes for educating everybody, which are now before the world, are brought to completion, there will be one hundred and eighty millions of people who will be able to write a letter in the English

language, and at least ninety millions of them who will have the courage to write that letter. This will be the ruin, intellectually speaking, of all those persons, naturally pre-eminent, who might conduce to the progress of the world in civilization—if there be such a thing as this progress.

This fearful result of general education might perhaps be avoided, if it were not for the Intrusiveness which is innate in mankind.

It was one of the truest sayings ever said, (the sayer is, I believe, unknown)—that "when a man has once done anything well, the world will take care that he shall not be able to do anything more of the same kind."

And what did that sagacious unknown man mean by this saying? He meant that the mental force of the unfortunate person who had so distinguished himself by doing any one thing well, would henceforth be frittered away by innumerable attempts, to some of which he would certainly yield, to gain his attention to those

matters for the management of which he has no particular aptitude, and which other persons of inferior capacity could manage as well as himself, or better than himself.

By reason of the horrible notoriety, which this miserable man has gained in doing this one thing well, he will have attracted to himself all those persons who are anxious to seize upon any eminent or notorious person as a means of furthering their own small views and purposes. He will be asked to preside at public dinners; to speak at public meetings; to become a member of innumerable committees; to give testimonials to people as to whose qualifications he knows little or nothing; and to make one of the concourse of notable persons at public funerals.

Even this state of things would lead to no great evil, if it were not for a certain weakness which is inherent in almost all men; and not least in the man who has once done anything well. Most persons are apt to be satisfied with themselves if their days

are busily employed. It is a very rare man, indeed, who should have taken such a complete survey of his own powers and capabilities, as to know what he can do best; and a still rarer man who, having gained this knowledge, should have the hourly courage that is needed to confine his exertions to his own proper work.

Moreover, to think steadily and severely is a very painful and unpleasant exercise for the human mind. The secondary work that any great man is asked to do, requires, for the most part, only secondary thought, and is a relief from, and an excuse for, not thinking upon those subjects in which the man in question has peculiar capability.

To a certain extent, therefore, this Intrusiveness of which I have spoken, will not be unwelcome to him. He will degenerate into a doer of secondary work, which, no doubt, will gain him sufficient applause and favour; and so we shall lose the best work of a great man,

or at any rate of a man capable in one direction.

Friends of mine complain, not without reason, that there is less forethought in the world than might be wished for. Forethought demands disengaged thought; and the man who has a thousand claims upon his attention, which seem to give fair scope for the daily exercise of his powers of thought, will not have the time, or, what is of still more importance, this disengagement from ordinary thought, which is necessary for forethought.

My friends, when they write their essays or make the speeches in our friendly council, to which I have the honour and pleasure of listening, are always anxious to provide remedies for the evils which they enumerate. I am anxious also to provide remedies in this case; but, being without much fertility of resource or imagination, I do not see where these remedies are to come from. I do not believe that, as the power of writing letters and the courage

to indite them, increase in the world, we shall find that fussy, busy people, deeming the objects of their fuss and their business to be all-important, will cease to importune my imaginary great man, or competent man, to busy himself with their affairs. On the other hand, I do not see a prospect of this man's having the courage to decline what I have called his secondary work. Indeed, the progress of democracy makes it more probable that he will seek to gain the suffrages of his fellow-citizens by rendering himself a slave to them for the transaction of this secondary work; and, in fine, this intrusiveness, and the inevitable subservience to it, constitute some of the imperative circumstances of the present time which lead me to think that the dreamers and enthusiasts, by whom I am surrounded, will fail, in all their efforts, to improve the wretched condition of mankind.

There was silence for a few minutes: then Sir John spoke.

Ellesmere. What a blessing it is to have some portion of that vulgar thing called "animal spirits." The rest of you seem somewhat depressed by Mauleverer's cheerless essay. Milverton is seriously considering what serious answer he can give to it. Whereas I, with my brutal animal spirits, have an answer already in my mind. I believe I have imparted it to you before, but that is no matter. Words of wisdom will bear many repetitions. Mauleverer is evidently most fearful as regards intrusive letter-writing to his great and capable man. There are two sides to that question. I have, before now, advised the foolish and intrusive letter-writer gravely to consider whether he is the only foolish and intrusive person in existence. If, with all his folly, he be a man of calculating mind, he will arrive at the fact, that there are at least eighty-three persons as foolish as himself, who will, on the day and hour that he is writing, be inclined to indite similar letters to the statesman, author, or thinker, whom he is addressing. This might make him pause.

Mauleverer. It won't.

Ellesmere. Then, on the other hand, there is the unfortunate person—'unfortunate,' Mauleverer has justly called him—who is to receive these intrusive communications. He will at last be awakened to the evil. The greater it is, the more likely he is to be awake to it. He bears with the eight millions, he will not bear with Mauleverer's ninety millions.

Sir Arthur. It all depends upon private secretaries. I have always thought that they are among the most important persons in the world. I had a private secretary once, who fought all this battle against intrusiveness, admirably. He would not even let me see the enormous quantity of trash addressed to me.

Cranmer. Your private secretary must almost be a great man himself, at any rate a most competent man, to be able to take this weight of Intrusiveness from off your shoulders.

Milverton. I am afraid that I am at variance with my company. I think you all make too much of this Intrusiveness. These 'secondary objects,' as Mauleverer was pleased to call them, are often not unimportant objects; and the decision upon them, the advice given about them, by men eminent among their fellow-citizens, is not altogether lost.

At the same time, I own that Mauleverer, though in a most sarcastic fashion, has put before us a real evil—an evil which, however, increased knowledge and cultivation will enable us to meet, and, perhaps, to conquer.

One great point, for which I think you all omit to make due allowance, is the power of thinking at odd times which thoughtful men possess.

Ellesmere. That is a queer expression.

Milverton. It is quite a delusion to suppose that the most thoughtful men, those even who try to regulate their minds most carefully, sit down to think over any

great subject "steadily and severely." I believe that if we knew the processes of the greatest minds, we should find that some of their best and most productive thoughts are thought out in a somewhat careless manner, in these odd times I speak of.

I dislike this Intrusiveness that Mauleverer has lectured us upon, far more for its effect upon health than for its prevention of thoughtfulness. Those subtle portions of our frame, those tiny filaments, the nerves, require more repose, perhaps, than any other part of the body; and they are very silent creatures. They do not care to tell you when they are over-wearied and overtaxed, until suddenly they break down altogether.

Ellesmere. Always fear the silent. I fear Mrs. Milverton. She talks less than any of us; but when she does say anything, it is tremendous.

Milverton. Fully half of the greatest errors that the greatest men have committed, have, I believe, arisen from a morbid state of nerves. And how can you expect that a man who is being lugged forward at all times, who never has profound rest (that is the case now with some of our principal statesmen), can have the nerves in good order? That is where Mauleverer's fulminations against Intrusiveness tell the most with me.

Referring to what I said about thinking being transacted at odd times, we are almost certain, from the biographies of eminent men, that this is the case. You detect it in the life of Sir Walter Scott; and I have no doubt

that Bacon, Shakespeare, and Machiavelli, who in their respective ways were busy men of the world, seldom sat down, as it were, to think; but did their thinking at odd times. But then I have no doubt, they had delicious pauses from thought; the world not being so fussy then, and not exacting such constant presence from its great men.

Sir Arthur. And then people had not so much to learn. Men were contented with knowing fewer languages. Milverton, to use one of his favourite words, fusses a great deal about the evils of competition. But you can see that he has mostly in his mind certain moral evils, as against which certain moral advantages might be put, though I have seldom cared to put them. Competition affords a stimulus for ordinary minds which nothing else does. But if it be carried to the excess which it seems likely to be in our time, what I am afraid of is, that it will dwarf originality. Of course it will not do so with really great men; but the worst mischief that great men do to the world——

Ellesmere. And they do a pretty deal of mischief.

Sir Arthur. —is, that they are made an example of; and they furnish very bad examples for dealing with the ordinary run of human beings.

Milverton. I never thought or said——

Sir Arthur. Don't interrupt me, Milverton. I am going to delight your heart, and perhaps I may forget to do so, if you lead the conversation into any other channel.

There was a school with which I was connected when I was last in office. I went down to visit the school. I shall disguise the circumstances as much as I can; but the substance of my story is exactly true.

After some converse with the scholars, I had some talk alone with the Principal. In the course of the talk I happened to say, "It is very wrong, I know, to have favourites; but one can't help having them. I must confess that little George Smith takes my fancy more than any other boy in the school. I am sure he is wonderfully intelligent."

The Principal smiled; nay more, the Principal began to laugh, though evidently endeavouring to restrain himself.

Then he said, "I must say, Sir Arthur, that you have not been very fortunate in your choice of an intellectual favourite. The boy is a charming boy: and, personally, he is a great favourite of mine too; but his stupidity, my dear Sir Arthur, is something fearful."

At that moment one of the under-masters entered. "Mr. Jenkins," said the Principal, "Sir Arthur is very much pleased with George Smith, and is greatly struck by the lad's intelligence." Jenkins looked at the Principal with a look which I could see meant to ask whether he should say what he thought about the boy. Receiving a counter-look of encouragement from the Head-master, Mr. Jenkins said, "He is a good lad, but I don't know what to do with him. Put him into any

class, he is sure to sink to the bottom of it in two or three days. If you remember, Doctor, we had him in the lower fifth, and he was always at the bottom of the class there. Then, with your permission, I put him in the upper fourth. There, again, he sank like lead in water to the bottom of the class. And the poor boy means well; but I think he hates the sight of a book: and half his time you see him looking about him in a moony kind of way."

Mr. Jenkins then left the room, having received some orders from the Principal. I left the room too, feeling very small, and saying I would take a walk before the boys' dinner, at which I was to be present.

As I walked in a wood near the school, I could not help thinking that I had made rather an ass of myself. I should not have said anything about the boys until I knew more about them. The Principal would say to himself, "This may be a great official swell," for doubtless so I appeared to him; "but his knowledge of boys is somewhat scanty." I said to myself, "I will send the Under-Secretary next time. I don't seem to make much of this business. It is evidently not my forte."

I returned to dinner; and I can tell you I felt very shy, dining in company with a great number of boys, feeling that I was observed with all the severe and petulant observation of the young; and knowing, too, that I must lead the conversation.

In the morning we had been engaged in a geogra-

phical examination, at which I had assisted. This furnished me with a topic; but I soon felt that this conversation, bordering on "shop," would by no means amuse the boys. It suddenly came into my mind that I would tell them an adventure of my own, in one of those distant countries, respecting the principal rivers in which most of us, fully including myself, had been rather hazy.

This topic succeeded in interesting the boys; and I soon found that I had the closest attention. At a critical period in the story, I came to a great difficulty which had beset me. I suddenly stopped my narrative, and asked the boys if any one could tell me what he would have done to extricate himself.

Now I must tell you that it was a real difficulty. I have been a great traveller, as you know; and I have always found that, in such difficult cases, it is not well to rush hither and thither, pursuing different and perhaps opposing plans for extricating one's self from any difficulty; but it is best to sit down, if one has the opportunity of sitting, and to have what a young friend of mine calls "a good solid think" over it. I did so on that occasion, and resolved upon a course which ultimately proved successful. In telling the story afterwards to experienced travellers, they have sometimes suggested another course; but they have been pleased to say that mine was as good as theirs. It was not so; it was only the second-best, but still it sufficed.

Well, the boys, upon my question, put down their

knives and forks, and looked into space, thinking earnestly. It was just the kind of difficulty which would interest the boyish mind. I took care also to put the difficulty before the Under-masters and the Head-master, as expecting an answer from them, if the boys failed to give one. I narrated the principal circumstances again; still there was silence, which lasted for several minutes.

I was about to solve the riddle, when the thin but sweet voice of Master George Smith was heard; and timidly and blushingly that boy put forward his view of what should be done under the circumstances—and it was mine, the very one I had adopted.

I don't want to make myself out particularly clever, but here was I, a man, and an experienced traveller; and this untravelled child had proved himself at least my equal in sagacity.

I should have been more than mortal, if I had not taken a stealthy look of triumph at the Principal and at Mr. Jenkins. The Principal, a thoroughly good fellow, nodded to me in return, with an expression that seemed to say, "You are not such a mere official fool as I took you to be."

That dear boy, George Smith, had rehabilitated me; and I resolved, on the next occasion, to come down myself, instead of sending the Under-Secretary; but the Fates, embodying themselves in a hostile division in the House of Commons, prevented that.

Cranmer. Do you know I think, Sir Arthur, that there are very subtle sympathies in the world.

Ellesmere. By all the powers of magic, what a romantic creature Cranmer is becoming!

Cranmer. That boy was like you, felt for you, perhaps unconsciously saw into your mind, and you into his.

Ellesmere. Well, Cranmer is coming out indeed. A man who has been secretary to the Treasury, talking of subtle sympathies, and reading other people's minds!

But the person who was delighted with this anecdote was Mr. Milverton. He got up and stood before the fire, and talked so rapidly to us that I cannot put down exactly what he said. Besides, everybody knows what he would be sure to say upon such an opportunity being given to him—"how you could never find out anybody's merits by ascertaining his book-knowledge; how the indocile people had been the great people of the world; how originality was stifled by cramming; how the world would find out that he was right, but it would be a long time first"—and the like. One portion, however, of his conversation

I remember he spoke of Mr. Carlyle. He said how that great man had been very kind to him when he was a youth; how they had taken long walks together; how still, though he had immensely admired his companion, he had been less influenced by him than other young men were, who had possessed the happiness of close intimacy with Mr. Carlyle. For, as he (Mr. Milverton) said, they two were men of very different natures; and he often wondered how Carlyle had tolerated him. But that there was one thing, as regards which he felt the intensest sympathy with Carlyle, and had been greatly strengthened by him.

It was in the profound belief that men differ very much from one another; and that to get a great man, or even a very capable man, into a potent place, was a signal gain for the world. Half men, "demi-semi" men, were, comparatively speaking, of no use. "You can't think with me, you can't feel with me," said

Mr. Milverton, somewhat mournfully; "even Cranmer has not had quite my experience, and seen what it is to have the real man to do anything. Such a man, as Carlyle used to say to me, makes the most unfit positions, the positions from which you think nothing good or great could come, fitting, useful, and productive."

I do not know how long Mr. Milverton would have continued in this strain, if Sir John Ellesmere, who cannot abide long discourse, and the less so, the more he agrees with it, had not cut Mr. Milverton's eloquence short by several ludicrous observations.

The conversation ended somewhat mournfully, for Mr. Milverton asked whether Sir Arthur had ever heard anything more of his little friend, George Smith; and Sir Arthur said that he had—that the poor boy had died early, in about three years after Sir Arthur's visit to the school.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOON after dinner, on that same day, Sir John Ellesmere retired at an early hour from his guests, muttering, as he went, something about "law-papers and other work having to be attended to." And we saw no more of him that evening. I noticed, as he left the room, that Lady Ellesmere smiled, and that she made no effort to detain him, as she generally does. I also noticed that a look of intelligence passed between our host and hostess, as if there was some secret understanding between them.

The next morning, it being a hopelessly wet day, we were all assembled in the library, when Mr. Milverton suddenly began the conversation thus :

Milverton. Johnson has been telling me what you talked about, during your walk the other day.

Ellesmere. By Jove! Has he? I hope he told you of the suffocating interest I take in your present subject, Milverton.

Milverton. He told me of the desire you feel to stifle it. It is one of the saddest things in life, that the subjects which should interest us most, are inevitably those which are dull, prosaic, and commonplace.

Cranmer. I didn't agree with him, Milverton.

Sir Arthur. And I don't agree with him.

Milverton. I am afraid, though, that none of you feel as I do about the fearful increase of large towns. I once saw the beginning of a great flood. A little tongue of water, not an inch in depth, and nowhere broader than a few feet, was marching quietly down the centre of a street. I merely thought that some neighbouring water-butt had overflowed, or that the turncock of the district was amusing himself, as turncocks sometimes seem apt to do, by letting out a little water, to show his power over that element. I walked on—

"Nescio quid meditans nugarum, et totus in illis,"

when I suddenly found that a little stream had invaded the pavement, and, in a minute or two, I had only time to escape into another street, at right angles and at a higher level. The flood turned up that street too; and, in short, it soon required considerable vigour to make

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one's way, dry-shod, from what may well be called, like its sister, fire, the devouring element.

So it is with the increase of our metropolis, and other great towns. You know of some delightful bit of suburb, perhaps, in former days, a portion of a nobleman's park, or of a long series of market gardens, rich in this spring-time with the beautiful blossoms of plum and cherry-trees. All of a sudden there are heaps of building materials seen; then one or two new houses of ghastly ugliness. You perceive, meanwhile, that the market-gardens are less cared for than usual, and that, in odd corners, a plentiful crop of weeds is allowed to appear. In the course of the summer, there are rows of unfinished buildings, and the trees have vanished, with the exception of a few injured ones that are allowed to remain, these not being in the way. The spot is bereft of all its beauty. It is now considered to be occupied; and is, in fact, part of the town.

It often happens that in neither case—neither for the flood, nor for this outburst of building, has due preparation been made. That is what I have to complain of.

Ellesmere. What do you mean, Milverton, by no due preparation has been made?

Milverton. Why, this. In the first place that, very likely, there has been no preparation for a judicious system of drainage and sewerage; but I mean far more than that. Where is the proper proportion of the smaller houses, the houses for the poor, that should accompany

this outburst of building? Little would I say against it, small would be my regret over the loss of cherry-trees and plum-trees, if this proportion were maintained.

Cranmer. Of course, my dear Milverton, you do not mean to say that a man may not do what he likes with his own in this matter. If the ground landlord and the builder see that it is to their interest that houses of a certain class should be erected, you cannot maintain that their freedom of action should be curbed in this direction.

Milverton. No, I cannot; I only wished, by appealing to each man's experience, to show what is going on; and, therefore, to make you all take more interest, a "suffocating interest" if you please, to use Ellesmere's malicious phrase, in anything that can be proposed to mitigate, even in the slightest degree, the necessary evils consequent upon the increase of great towns, amongst a free people.

It is a dreadful drawback, even upon those improvements which are beautiful and useful in themselves, that they compel, for the most part, immense destruction of the habitations of the poor. Now there have been signal improvements made, in our time, in some of the densest parts of London. But, I regret to say, they have had this great drawback, as I am told, of a large displacement of the poor.

Of all matters important to human civilization, after the production of sufficient food, comes the dwelling-place.

What is the good of insisting upon cleanliness and sobriety, and all the other virtues, to people who live with two other families in the same room? I am taking an extreme case; but, going upwards from that, the same law holds good. Crime finds great difficulty in getting a habitat for itself in decent homes; and, in all nations, the test to be given for real civilization is in the comparative goodness or badness of the dwellings of the lowest class. The great traveller, Dr. Schweinfurth, says, that cleanliness and cooking are the tests. Well, substantially I agree with him; for how are cleanliness and good cookery to be developed, or maintained, in habitations of extreme squalidity?

Ellesmere. I could say something against that, taking the cooking of gipsies, for example; but I won't do so. I will be generous, and allow Milverton's dicta to pass unquestioned.

Milverton. I don't want your generosity, especially as it would only have been real if it had been silent. The gipsies have clear open space; and, under these circumstances, neither cleanliness nor good cookery, (by the way, have you ever tasted their cookery, Ellesmere?) make any valid exception to my rule.

Ellesmere. I maintain a generous silence. There is nothing that these so-called philanthropists detest so much as the slightest objection being made to any of their theories.

Sir Arthur. I have read Dr. Schweinfurth's book,

and what struck me most in it was an assertion of his, for which I dare say he has good grounds, that savages are more slaves to fashion than even civilized people. As I read that passage, I thought how it would have tickled your fancy, Ellesmere. It is the fashion for women in some savage tribes to pull their eyelashes out.

Ellesmere. Can you wonder that our women should build up pyramids of hair, perfectly deforming the human countenance? There is a case of disproportion for you, Milverton; worse than your building one!

Milverton. Well, we did not meet here to talk about savages. If all of you are tired of my subject, you will doubtless wish for what relaxation Ellesmere can provide for you. I hear that he was mightily suggestive the other day, and put forward several great subjects, upon which he wished essays should be written. Doubtless he will favour us with his views upon some great matter.

To our astonishment, less to mine though than to that of the others, Ellesmere rose up, took a seat at the great library table, and pulled out a roll of papers. I thought that Mr. Milverton looked rather disconcerted, for he had been anxious, as I knew, to read a paper which should show that his plan of combining administrative skill

and experience with legislative hardihood (that was his expression), might have a hearing from the Friends to-day.

Ellesmere. I really don't pretend, you know, to be a writer. As with all other crafts, that particular one requires practice and experience; but I have just put loosely together a few simple thoughts of mine on a subject which I shall entitle The Art of Leaving Off. If you should wish to hear what I have to say, my modesty will not prevent my saying it.

Of course we assented, and the reading began.

THE ART OF LEAVING OFF.

In all the affairs of life, there are two great difficulties to encounter—the beginning and the ending. The wisdom of most nations, as far as that wisdom can be expressed in proverbs, has commented upon the difficulty of beginning well—"*To begin is half the battle;*" "*A good beginning makes a good ending;*" "*Beginning and ending shake hands,*" and the like.

Mankind, with its usual indolence, has shirked the less easy task of commenting upon the difficulty of ending.

How great that difficulty is, the poor ending of many novels, ministries, after-dinner speeches, sermons, and the lives of the greatest men, may sufficiently declare.

It was a very wise arrangement of former days, now unhappily abandoned in fashionable circles, that the hostess should take the upper end of the table, and the host the lower end, for it was justly felt that the principal guests and the guests of most youthfulness, or least note, required to be especially attended to, whereas the middle guests were sure to take care of themselves. And so it is with the middle portions of the sermons, histories, novels, poems, ministerial actions, and the like, to which I have alluded. All history and all biography serve to illustrate my theme. These same middle portions of a man's or of a nation's career, can often be judiciously skipped

by the reader; but every one is anxious to know how a great affair began, and how it ended.

Most of the failures in life arise from an ignorance of how and when to leave off. When you read the life of almost any great man, with the exception of Augustus Cæsar, you see how much greater a man he would have been if he had known how and when to leave off. The historian, learned in dates and facts of all kinds, will doubtless be ready to show to you how Xerxes, Themistocles, Czar Peter, Frederick the Great, and both the Napoleons, might have left off at certain critical periods of their fortunes, when their renown and their greatness would not have been injured by any decay or decadence. For my own part, hardly venturing to treat of such high matters, I am still persuaded that Draco and Aristides would have been more successful in their respective vocations, if they had known and practised judiciously the great art of leaving off. Fortune, being a woman, is

impatient as well as fickle, and more often changes from weariness of length, and from disgust at reiteration, than from inconstancy in love or liking.

To descend to minor matters: proverbs seldom err in humility of assertion; but there is one which does fail signally in this respect. "Enough is as good as a feast," so runs, or rather creeps, that modest proverb; but I say "Enough is better than any feast," and that, upon one atom more than enough being added, detriment and disgust begin. This applies to all the amusements, to all the festivities, and even to all the sensual enjoyments of the world. That host, or hostess, who should know how to make his or her entertainments leave off at the right time (I have known only two such) will prove themselves to be the arch-host and hostess of mankind. The givers of all entertainments, where money is to be paid, should ponder well the art of "leaving off." Money is to be made by the mastery of that art.

Now, to come to matters which are neither so great as the careers of kings and conquerors, nor so humble as the giving of feasts and the providing of amusement for the world. I would deal first with the arts of persuading and convincing. Too much talk, too much argument, have been the ruin of many a persuasive speech, of many a persuasive conversation. You have produced an effect upon your hearer by a course of argument which has been incontrovertible—at least by him. You add something, a weak something, which he can answer, which he does answer, then or thereafter; and, having answered that, your former argument is, however unjustly, damaged, and loses half its weight.

Although it may be a trivial thing to mention, the art of leaving off is not less requisite in courtship than in other and more important transactions of human life. How many a man has failed to make himself happy, or miserable, "ever afterwards," because he has made too much of a slight

advantage, or pressed too far a small encouragement. He has not known how or where to leave off. The maiden, perhaps both shy and proud, as maidens are wont to be, declines to have it supposed that she is altogether won, merely because she did not at once repress pretensions which at first were humbly made, but to which she was not prepared, at the time, to allow any further development.

I should be sorry only to have pointed out the difficulties of leaving off, without providing some suggestions, more or less valuable, which should enable the world to know how to leave off.

(—I flatter myself, that is a Milvertonian touch. If you observe, after stating any evil, he always provides some scraps of remedy.—)

I trust that you noticed a fine sentence of mine, some way back, where I spoke of the goddess Fortune. That was only a fine sentence. It did not go to the root

of the matter. It was chiefly false. It is not that Fortune becomes tired of any man or people, at least of any sensible man or sensible people. Fortune is in reality very just. But why these great kings, conquerors, and statesmen fail, is, because they will attempt similar things—things similar to their former successes—under dissimilar circumstances. They think that *they* have done the whole business, and that the circumstances have had little to do with it.

Milverton. Very good, indeed, Ellesmere!

(Ellesmere got up, made a bow, and then resumed.)

For instance, a nation has been downtrodden for some time, has not had its fair weight in the world's proceedings; and then a great general leads its armies on to victory. For a certain time that *élan* lasts. And the conquering general will go on attempting to conquer when his troops have no longer the vigour of their first

despair, and when the opponents have become wary from frequent defeat. He did not know when to leave off.

I shall show you that I do know, by not dwelling upon any details or any formal illustrations of the same failure in civil affairs, how and when to leave off. I shall merely say that a ministry which seeks to do in its fourth year of power anything similar to what it attempted to do, and did, in its first year of power, is a ministry which does not know how to leave off.

I now proceed to advise the minor personages. Fortunately there are few of us who are kings or conquerors, or the heroes in novels. But there is the man who has to make an oration or a discourse. I say he is a noodle if he has not previously determined how and when he shall leave off. One of the great arts is, that he should be all along preparing for his conclusion, or peroration, or whatever you may call it; but it should not be too clearly anticipated. To have its full effect, it

should have a little of surprise in it. It is not necessary that it should be a great unwieldy sentence of many clauses. If I may venture to quote Scripture in an essay which has perhaps been a little too light in texture for the introduction of solemn and sacred words, I would say that there is no ending so grand and so effective as that which closes one great period of the Life that has been of most import to the world. "Now Barabbas was a robber."

Well then, as regards ordinary daily affairs, in which most of us manifest so little discretion in leaving off. This indiscretion is the result of shyness, and often the result of a sense of failure.

This latter motive occurs largely in speech-making. A man goes floundering on in the hope of redeeming himself, and winning back the attention of his audience which he feels he has lost; but the hope is, for the most part, vain. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to regain that attention which has at the outset been

given to you, but which you have forfeited by disappointing it.

This essay would be incomplete, if it did not touch upon the errors which are made in literature, in reference to the art of leaving off. You can point to few works of any mark in which there are not to be seen too much explanation, too much amplification, and in which the salient points do not come at too great a distance from each other. More and more demands are being made upon the time of each of us, as civilization advances; and those authors will have the greatest chance of being listened to now, and being occasionally referred to by posterity, who know how to put their points of thought or argument succinctly, and in sufficiently rapid succession.

I conclude by recalling to your minds a fact, and you must have noticed it, which is to be observed in the singing of certain songs. There shall be a song sung by some great artist with an ending, admirable in every respect, to which even those who,

like myself, delight in a grand and conclusive outburst of satisfying harmony, can make no objection. Yet, if afterwards, the person accompanying the singer plays only a few bars to wind up, as it were, the accompaniment, the ending of the song loses much of its effect upon the audience; and the applause is not so fervent as it would have been, if the vocal and the instrumental music had ceased at one and the same moment.

There was a pause for a minute or two after Sir John had ceased reading. Then Mr. Milverton spoke.

Milverton. I like your essay very much, Ellesmere. I should not call it an essay, though, but a speech.

Lady Ellesmere. That is just what I told you, John.

Ellesmere. I don't care what you call it. Of course I am more accustomed to making speeches than to writing essays; and I told you from the first that I was not a practised writer.

Cranmer. I must say that Ellesmere has shown great originality. He admitted that he had written one sentence which, though fine, was erroneous; I think he said "false."

Milverton. I remember, when I was young, writing some paper—about sanitary matters I think it was—and showing it to an older and much wiser friend. I dare say it was full of the exuberant faults of youthfulness. He said to me, "My dear fellow, I foresee that this is not the only thing you will write. Let me give you a bit of advice. Whenever you write a sentence that particularly pleases you, *cut it out.*" Of course, such a saying is not to be taken at the "foot of the letter," as the French would say; but there is a depth of wisdom in it. I have thought of it a hundred times since; and I hope it has done me some good.

Ellesmere. I believe that I have, in this essay (I shall call it an essay), laid down the foundation for a practice which would conduce immensely to truthfulness. I will tell you the whole story about that sentence. When I had written it, I own I was pleased with it. I read it to Lady Ellesmere when she came up-stairs. She thought it very good. Then, in the middle of the night, I bethought me that it was all nonsense—poetic nonsense—and that the real reason why these conquerors, kings, and statesmen often make but a sorry ending, is, that the things they keep on doing, having once done them with success, are not truly similar, on account of the variation of the surrounding circumstances. It is not that the by-standers become weary of the same thing being done; but that the same thing cannot be done. But I

couldn't cut out my sentence. Virtue has its limits—certainly with such a fallible mortal as I am, so I kept my fine sentence, but got up early to smite it afterwards.

Now you know that is a bright example, and what is better than a bright example, it is a useful example. A man cannot bear to "cut out" something that he has taken great pains in elaborating; but he may be able to say, "this was not the whole truth, and now I will tell you what is the truth." He saves his vanity: he anticipates the critics: he is, in these his dominions, supreme. I have given an example to all authors.

Sir Arthur. Touching the great question of Leaving Off, might one not say, Ellesmere, that some of the eminent men in your profession would do well to leave off, occasionally, a little earlier than they do?

Ellesmere. No, no. If you jurymen were wiser, or, at least, sharper than you are, advocates might be more succinct and reticent; but not otherwise.

Milverton. If Johnson has not belied you—I mean you who were out walking the other day—other subjects for essays occurred to you. I wish very much to gain attention from you for my own subject, which has infinitely more need of discussion than your merely playful subjects. Ah! my good friends, if you could but see what might be done for the inhabitants of great towns, you would not think the subject dull! We think the greatest subjects dull, because we have not the heart, or the soul, to see their greatness.

Ellesmere. Don't get in a rage, Milverton. Fury is the particular foible of philosophers.

Milverton. I am willing to humour you, as far as I am concerned; and, therefore, I say, go on if it pleases you with some of the topics which you started in your walk. I think I heard that Mauleverer maintained that the folly of mankind was a constant quantity in all ages.

Mauleverer. I have not been misrepresented. However much it may offend your praises of mankind, I do hold that theory.

Milverton. Well, then, give us an opportunity of discussing it. Say your say in an essay.

Mauleverer. I, for once, agree with Ellesmere, namely, as to the practice necessary for authorship. I can't write essays. He can make speeches. I can't do that; but I will tell you what I will do. I will write a letter to an imaginary American friend, who, I will suppose, has asked me the question, whether this amount of folly is constant or not. You must not expect fine writing from me. I shall have nothing to "cut out," and nothing of my own to answer, after the fashion of Sir John Ellesmere.

We all agreed that it would be delightful to hear what Mr. Mauleverer would indite upon this interesting subject; and then we went our several ways.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. MAULEVERER asked Mr. Milverton to lend me to him as an amanuensis for a day or two, while he was preparing his promised letter to the American.

The number of books which Mr. Mauleverer desired me to find for him in the library was astonishing. Luckily it was a library of great extent. His researches were chiefly historical; and I supposed that we should have one of the most learned and elaborate letters that had ever been written by an Englishman to an American.

At length, the letter having been written, we met, by appointment, in the library. Mr. Mauleverer declared that he was ready to begin, and commenced at once.

"My dear Friend,—It is a question of much interest that you have put before me —namely, 'whether the folly in the world is, or is not, a constant quantity.' You are right in referring this grave question to an inhabitant of the Old World; because, doubtless, we have had a longer experience of human folly than you have had, though I feel confident that, even with your smaller experience, you will be able to clench the opinion which I shall give in the matter.

"I had at first thought that, exhausting the records of history, I would prove to you that my theory is the true one; but such elaboration is needless.

"I began by enumerating the follies and the mistakes of each age. It will be useful, perhaps, if I recount some of them to you.

"There were times in which we men believed that there was something divine in every herb, flower, and tree; when we understood that there were nymphs and satyrs in every wood; when we prayed to every god and goddess whom we could

possibly invest with an imaginary existence. We acknowledged the rights of our neighbour by considering him as the first person to be attacked; and we relieved him from the burden of his wives and his children by making them slaves. At the same time we wrote very fine poetry, and concluded that we, on this small ball of earth, were the sole inhabitants of the universe.

"Then came a change over the spirit of our dream. We believed in the unity of the Godhead. Not content, however, with this belief, we were good enough to lay down the exact limits of the Godhead's nature and its action. We ascertained truth upon the most recondite matters by slaying those who did not exactly agree with our opinions. Often neither we, nor the people we slew or burnt, could agree upon the meaning of the terms we used. We had been taught that we should be as good and kind to others as to ourselves; and, feeling that we should like to be slain or burnt, if we were in the least degree wrong about

our views of the world and its government, we slew or burnt those who differed from us in the slightest particular.

"In secular matters we felt, that the larger the empire, that could be subjected to one sovereign, the better it would be governed; and, consequently, we each fought for our respective sovereigns; and we killed, burned, murdered, and enslaved, upon the highest principles of imperial benevolence.

"Another change came over the spirit of our dream. We thought that everybody was as good and wise as every other body; and that nobody should be without anything which anybody else possessed. This produced the same amount of killing, slaughtering, and enslaving as heretofore. The only change was one of theory. Each one of us was to be the sovereign for whom we fought.

"Throughout most of these periods, we believed that certain of our fellow-creatures possessed the power of injuring us and our cattle in some mysterious manner. We burned or drowned those potent personages

whom, by infallible signs, we knew to be possessed of this power.

"Coming to the present day, we do not believe that this mysterious power exists in our fellow-creatures. We think—at least, some few of us do—that we are not competent to decide irrefragably upon the nature, intentions, and objects of the Supreme Power of the universe. But we still think that the best mode of settling any doubtful question which may arise between two sets of human beings, having different modes of speech, is to ascertain which should be able to kill the greatest number of the other side.

"All this time, my dear friend, we were too much occupied in considering who we are and why we are here, and what will become of us hereafter, to give our minds to such trivial matters as to how we should be fed, clothed, or housed, and in what enjoyment or recreation we should spend that portion of time which remains to us after our daily work.

"Forgive me, my dear friend, for leading you through the long account of the follies we have committed. It has little whatever to do with the question. One rung in a ladder (have you that word 'rung' in America?) cannot say that it is different in form or nature from any other rung in the ladder, simply because it happens to be in a higher position. Turn the ladder the other way, and it is the lower rung. And so it is with the ages of mankind. The folly at all times is a constant quantity. From the nature of a ladder, it is inevitable that one rung must be higher than another; and, when you come to the top of this particular ladder, it leads to nothing and to nowhere.

"The essential folly of mankind does not vary. If you doubt that, let us go into detail. For instance, it is surely a folly that men should be led by eloquence instead of by reason. Are they less the slaves of eloquence now than they ever were?

"It is surely a great folly that men should

believe in the exceeding pleasantness of riches. Are they less convinced of that now than they ever were?

"It is surely a folly that men should be jealous of one another, and that everybody should wish to be uppermost. Is that folly diminished? Are the strivings to rise, in what they call society, at all less now than they ever were?

"We have been told to love one another. Do people love one another more or less at present than they ever did? Is not this love, or the want of it, a constant quantity?

"Is misunderstanding less frequent? Is misrepresentation less frequent? Wider publicity is given to everything. Has truthfulness in the least degree increased with the increase of publicity?

"Has friendship increased? Anxious as I am to show the uniformity of human life, I should say that this, one of the greatest soothers of human misery, has decreased.

"It may be, that the powers of imagination in men have increased, and, conse-

quently, that they feel a little more than they used to do, for the physical pain of others. They are good enough to provide medicaments for those whom they still, as recklessly as ever, wound in battle. But has this increase of imagination done anything to quell the real evils of mankind, such as war? Are the armies of Europe less in number than they were in former times? I am told that, in former ages, three or four hundred thousand men contrived to do the fighting business of Europe; whereas now five or six millions are considered to be necessary for this entirely Christian occupation. I descend, as the eminent essayist who preceded me"—

Ellesmere. Brother Jonathan won't know anything about this eminent essayist.

—"I descend, as *an* eminent essayist has said, to consider the minor matters connected with my subject. Is dress less foolish? Is entertainment less foolish now than

it ever was? I am told by historical books that when people burnt other people, for differing with them about something in which a single vowel showed the difference, that at any rate the burners and the burned dined at reasonable times, and that all their daily proceedings had some reference to the movements of that great luminary, the sun.

"No, my dear friend. Mankind are a little more sensitive than they used to be, which sensitiveness increases pain at least as much as pleasure. Their objects may appear to be a shade less absurd, because they happen to be on the higher rung of the ladder; but their own inherent folly is as great, as constant, and as abiding as ever.

"I remain,

"Yours very sincerely,

"ERNEST MAULEVERER.

"P.S.—Don't imagine that because your folly differs slightly from ours in quality, that it is less in quantity. The folly of

youth is not one whit less than the folly of middle-age."

Milverton. Well, Mauleverer, you have stated your case very well; but your statement is outrageously unjust. Your letter is artful; but its art does not cover its inadequacy to prove your case. You were obliged to own that we had become more sensitive to human suffering; that, in general, we had become more imaginative. That increase of imagination will always extend as civilization advances, and there is no telling the good that it will produce. You sneer at our being so anxious to cure the wounds of those who are wounded in battle. Don't you see that this is the commencement of the end of all fighting? It may be that the end is a long way off; but a hard, if not a fatal, blow has been given to fighting, by this care for those who are injured in battle. Is it nothing that the first and best men in the world have raised their voices against slavery? Is it nothing that the absurdities of the belief in witchcraft should have ceased to influence us?

Your simile about the rungs of the ladder is ingenious, but it won't hold good. You are comparing something physical with something mental. The platform of thought upon which each generation finds itself placed, is a platform of a very different kind from that of the preceding thirty years.

Mauleverer. I did not descend into mean details;

but, if you talk in this high-flown manner, I must make my objections in detail. There are four important things which concern man's life a good deal, namely, his dress, his dwelling-place, his food, his festivities. Now for the first.

Ellesmere. Oh! I give up dress; that is, as regards the female species.

Sir Arthur. Men have decidedly improved in dress; and this generation has shown less folly than the previous one, and much less folly than the one preceding that.

Lady Ellesmere. What they have gained in sense they have lost by hideousness.

I won't enter into the subject of women's dress, because you men are apt to be so rude in talking of that matter; but I believe that, what Sir Arthur said about men's dress, exactly applies to women's dress.

Mrs. Milverton. I remember hearing from an old lady, who was the youngest of several sisters, how, after her hair had been powdered and arranged into some grand form, a foot in height, she was not allowed to sleep, or, at least, to go to bed, on the night preceding a county ball, lest this vast and elaborate structure should be discomposed. As she was the youngest, her hair had to be dressed first, and so she had the longest time to wait, taking what rest she could in a constrained position, watched by her anxious mother. The men, too, then must have been equally foolish, for I have been told of regiments of

soldiers whose pigtails were arranged the night before a review or early parade; and I suppose that these poor fellows did not dare to sleep any more than this young lady.

Mauleverer. I am delighted to see you are so satisfied about dress. We will now come to the dwelling-place.

Milverton. My dear Mauleverer, each of these subjects you bring before us is really so large in extent, that it would require hours to discuss it, and experts to do so adequately. I am ready to admit, as I have often admitted before, that there has been less improvement in architecture than in any other human device; but there is one great reason for this which, in itself, shows improvement. Locomotion having so greatly increased and improved, the dwelling-place has become, or seems to have become, of less importance. I own that it is less substantial, and great evils follow from want of substantiality.

Mauleverer. Now, about food.

Ellesmere. Here our opponent is in great force. For my part I give up.

Sir Arthur. I do not.

Mrs. Milverton. Nor I.

Milverton. I am incompetent to deal with this matter. I can only say that most dinners in our class of life seem to me to be too expensive, too elaborate. Let us skip this subject.

Mauleverer. I cannot consent to that, for I maintain

that the ladies of the present day have much less knowledge of cookery, and suffer much more waste in their households, than their ancestresses did. But what do you say about festivities—about the amusements of mankind?

Sir Arthur. Well, I say, for one, that the greatest amusement in the world, namely, music, has largely increased, and has judiciously increased.

Mauleverer. Let us be a little more general in our treatment of this part of the subject. Can anything be more comprehensively absurd than the times and seasons for amusement chosen in the present day? If I were to go back to the novels, the biographies, and even the histories of former periods, I could show you that balls began at seven and ended at twelve; that great dinners were transacted at reasonable times, before the digestive powers of mankind were exhausted by the labours of the day. And that, in fact, to put the matter in a large and general way, our ancestors had a great regard and respect for the night.

Ellesmere. He is not far wrong there, Milverton!

Milverton. I have nothing to say in answer to that.

Mrs. Milverton. I have, but I hardly dare say it. I know you will laugh at me.

Milverton. Don't be afraid, my dear; I will, as in duty bound, maintain the wisdom of your argument, whatever it may be.

Mrs. Milverton. Well, then, everybody isn't very

beautiful by day; and few things are so beautiful by day as by night. I have not your memory, Leonard, otherwise I could quote a splendid passage from Byron, I think it is in "Childe Harold," where he speaks of the moon turning even ungainly objects into beauty.

Ellesmere. Well, Mrs. Milverton, proceed.

Mrs. Milverton. I have only to say that gaslight and candlelight do the same thing in-doors that the moon does out-of-doors. We have all been quoting our ancestors, and I remember what my mother used to tell me of the general effect of comparative ugliness when the gentlemen and ladies used to come down in full dress, in broad, blazing daylight, to a four o'clock dinner in some grand boarding-house at Bath, Harrogate, or Brighton. I have often heard you gentlemen of Oxford and Cambridge talk of "gaudy days." It is almost impossible in daylight to be judiciously gaudy. And, after all, this gaudiness is what you men delight in. I should like to say something more.

Ellesmere. Pray say it.

Mrs. Milverton. But it is a very delicate subject.

Ellesmere. Never mind: we are the boys to appreciate delicacy.

Mrs. Milverton. Well, don't you think that most men fall in love by candlelight? You need not all laugh so. I am sure it's true.

Ellesmere. Now would any one but a woman think

of making such a remark? They are so detestably observant of small things.

Milverton. Yes; but she is right, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. But surely they see their lovers by daylight afterwards.

Cranmer. I think these are rather trivialities. I had expected that Milverton, at any rate, would have gone into the subject seriously.

Milverton. Anything to oblige you, my dear Cranmer; and, seriously speaking, I have an enormous objection to all of Mauleverer's theories on the subject. What makes it almost impossible to come to any decided views on such a subject is this: each man is more sensible, or less foolish if you choose to put it so, than the mass of men.

Sir Arthur. And, again, the mass is more sensible than each man.

Ellesmere. Witness the House of Commons, for instance. As a body they partake no individual member's crotchets. They are wonderfully common-sensible, taken as a whole.

Milverton. Granted: but please return to my statement that, in many things, each man is more sensible than the mass of men. But, mark you, for a long, long time he is powerless. Some folly reigns, almost every individual is against it; but he, the individual, is silent, or he does not take any active part against it, because he fears that others do not think with him, and that custom is, for the moment, too strong. So the folly goes

on, its foolishness being perceived and fully appreciated by thousands. Mauleverer made a good point when he spoke of the lateness of the hours for festivity; and he might have added, for real business. My wife fought the battle well against him; but one must admit that she was not altogether victorious. Thousands of persons think as we do; but, individually, they are powerless. Some day, perhaps, some great personages will adopt our views, and then the foolish thing will, all of a sudden, be greatly modified.

Sir Arthur. What you say is very true, Milverton. It explains what, to me, was one of the most striking things in one of Lecky's books, namely, how the idiotic belief in witchcraft appeared suddenly to fade away. I have no doubt that thousands of persons had perceived this idiotcy. Then some one, whom history does not think it worth its while to mention, made a protest against the folly; and the effect of this protest spread like lightning.

The folly dropped off from mankind without much being said about it; and that is why we do not know the full history of the transaction.

Milverton. Now I will give you an account of the rise of a folly—one of the greatest follies, to my thinking, that has arisen in our time. I will not specify it, lest that should produce lengthy discussion. You must assume for the moment with me that it is a folly. It has arisen in consequence of two or three one-idead men

being placed in power, and being not only able to talk out their one idea, but also to bring it into practical life. Now I know, not only from conversation with my own friends, but from the talk in omnibuses and railway carriages, that the majority of men perceive the complete folly of this foolish thing. But there comes in the Conservative element, very powerful for good, very powerful also for the maintenance of evil; and this foolish thing will be fought over for a generation or two, before it is reduced within due limits.

Now do you see what I am driving at—what all this comes to? It means, that you must not condemn individual men for folly, until you know whether they are really consenting to the folly; and, as I intimated before, each man may be much less guilty than he appears to be; than, for instance, he would appear to a foreigner, on account of a foolish practice being prevalent in his country.

Sir Arthur. You may talk against man as much as you like, but what a wonderful creature he is! If he started as a gelatinous ascidian, how he has got on in the world! He tells us, now, what are the metals that are predominant in the distant stars.

Ellesmere. Yes: no doubt he is very grand; but, as a bird discovers its nest by foolish chirruping and twittering whenever you come near it, so does man discover his folly, mostly by his talk. What a sensible fellow he would seem to be, if he were but silent! I must go. I

see the gas-man at the gate. Some of these confounded gas-pipes have gone wrong in the house. These are your fine inventions. The dips of our youth gave us no trouble, except in the snuffing. I hope no one will invent any new thing in my time. I am wholly with Mauleverer on this point. All your inventions end in being a great trouble to a father of a family.

So saying, Ellesmere left the room.

Milverton. I have only one thing more to say, but to my mind it is convincing. I believe that cruelty is the greatest folly in the world; and certainly that particular folly has steadily diminished from age to age. That's my answer, in brief, to Mauleverer's letter. What his American friend will say remains to be seen.

No one seemed inclined to continue the conversation, and the library was soon deserted.

CHAPTER X.

I WILL here give an account of the conversation which took place during another of our long walks in the country, near Richmond. Mr. Cranmer began thus.

Cranmer. While we are thinking of subjects for essays, I should like to suggest "Hospitality."

Ellesmere. It is a pretty subject, but, if treated by Milverton or Sir Arthur, or any regular essayist, it would be sure to be made too lengthy. We should have ancient and modern hospitality contrasted. We should be told which had been the most hospitable nation in the world. The nice question, whether there was more hospitality in the east or in the west, would be deftly discussed. And what is desirable to be said would be overlaid by this somewhat superfluous discourse. I could give you a neat little essay consisting of about a dozen sentences which would include all that it is necessary to say.

Cranmer. Pray let us have these dozen sentences as quickly as possible.

Ellesmere. Official men are so given to deal with all questions "as quickly as possible," that they require the same unnatural speed from other human beings. I must have some little time to collect my thoughts.

We walked on for some minutes in silence, in order that Sir John might have time to collect his thoughts; and then he thus began.

Ellesmere. A perfect host is as rare a being as a great poet; and for much the same reason, namely, that to be a perfect host, requires as rare a combination of qualities as those which are needed to produce a great poet. He should be like that lord-in-waiting of whom Charles II. said, that he was "never in the way and never out of the way." He should never degenerate into a showman, for there is nothing of which most people are so soon weary as of being shown things, especially if they are called upon to admire them. He, the perfect host, should always recollect that he is in his own home, and that his guests are not in theirs: consequently those local arrangements which are familiar to him should be rendered familiar to them. His aim should be to make his house a home for his guests, with all

the advantage of novelty. If he entertains many guests, he should know enough about them to be sure that he has invited those who will live amicably together, and will enjoy each other's society. He should show no favouritism, if possible; and if he is a man who must indulge in favouritism, it should be to those of his guests who are more obscure than the others. He should be judiciously despotic as regards all proposals for pleasure, for there will be many that are diverse, and much time will be wasted if he does not take upon himself the labour and the responsibility of decision. He should have much regard to the comings and goings of his guests, so as to provide every convenience for their adit and their exit. Now I am going to insist on what I think to be a very great point. This is not to count as a sentence. He should aim at causing that his guests should hereafter become friends, if they are not so at present, so that they might, in future days, trace back the beginning of their friendship to their having met together at his house. Now that last sentence would please Milverton, I know. My remark about it will not count as a sentence. I mean to keep strictly to the dozen. He, the perfect host, must have the art to lead conversation without absorbing it himself, so that he may develop the best qualities of his guests. His expense in entertainment should not be devoted to what is luxurious, but to what is comfortable and enabling. The first of all

things is that he should be an affectionate, indeed, a loving host, so that every one of his guests should feel that he is really welcome. He should press them to stay; but should be careful that this pressing does not interfere with their convenience, so that they stay merely to oblige him, and not to please themselves. In considering who should be his guests, he should always have a thought as to those to whom he would render most service by having them as his guests: his poorer brethren, his more sickly brethren. Those whom he feels would gain most advantage by being his guests, should have the first place in his invitations; and, for this considerateness, he will be amply rewarded by the benefits he will have conferred.

Mauleverer. I seldom praise—praise injures most people; but I must say that Ellesmere has given us an excellent essay. What, however, did he mean by that word "enabling," as regards expense?

Ellesmere. I meant something of which, I am afraid, you will not heartily approve, Mauleverer. I meant that if he had to choose between the two things, he had better have less sumptuous dinners, and more horses and carriages, so as to give his guests a diversity of amusement, and to render them more independent of himself.

Cranmer. What did you mean when you used the words "local arrangements?"

Ellesmere. Well, this will take rather a long explana-

tion. I meant that all the details which are known to a man in his own home should be made known to the guests. They are very trivial things; and I will take a trivial instance. The hours of the arrival and departure of the post, the distances of the neighbouring towns, the means for telegraphing, and a score of other little matters, should be at once made known to the guests. Then in the arrangement of the rooms, there is so much that may be made conducive to the comfort of a guest by a skilful host or hostess. I remember, when I was attorney-general, and lived more in society, I was much invited to country-houses. I hate going from my own home, except to Milverton's, but one is occasionally obliged to accept invitations. During this, the busiest period of my life, there were three persons who struck me as being perfect hosts. One was a man of letters; I may as well say it was Dickens. The other was an archbishop, and the third was the prime minister of the day, whose excellence, however, in hostship was to be attributed to his wife. Now, with these three super-eminent hosts or hostesses, everything was prepared for me that I could possibly want. Even the books were looked out for me that I should be most likely to require.

This minute care, however, is a thing which one has no right to expect, and is, after all, comparatively trivial. If I may presume to say what is best worth attending to in my essay—and I am really very much

pleased that Mauleverer approves of it—it is that hospitality should be made useful. What kindness you may do to a rising man by bringing him in contact with those who have risen! In few words, I would say that hospitality should never be devoted to the enjoyment or the glorification of the host or hostess, but should be devoted to the comfort, and, if possible, to the future welfare of the guests. This would take hospitality some way, even if only a little way, towards Christianity.

Well, then, there is another thing I would like to say. I kept to my twelve sentences because I said I would, but what I secretly wanted to add was this—that in all your hospitality you should never forget your own neighbourhood, considering that neighbourhood from the highest to the lowest. In these locomotive days one is too apt to forget one's neighbours. They, above all people, should be made to share your pleasures and your amusements; and, if this were done in every neighbourhood, society would be greatly benefited, and people would be held together. One of the greatest dangers of modern times is lest we should live in sets, as it were, and should not intercommunicate freely.

Sir Arthur. I quite agree with you, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. I will give you an instance of what I mean. Some of you will recollect that, years ago, we were very theatrical at Milverton's, and we got up several plays. We agreed to invite not only our great

neighbours, but the farmers, the artisans, and even the labourers; and I never was present at anything that was more jovial in all my life. That conveys what I mean: seek, as far as you can, to make everybody within your ken partakers of your pleasures and of your hospitality. You will often be able to afford to do this, if you avoid luxurious entertainment; and hardly anybody cares about luxury. Don't have fruits and vegetables out of season, and therefore immensely dear: don't have refined dinners, whatever Mauleverer may say; but make your entertainments as conducive to the happiness and enjoyment of as large a number of people as you can, ignoring to a certain extent the claims of rank, fashion, or conformity.

We walked home together in separate parties. I was in the company of Sir Arthur and Mr. Mauleverer; and they both owned that they had never heard Sir John talk more sensibly or more kindly than he had done on the present occasion; but Mr. Mauleverer added, with that cynicism which is never absent from him, that Sir John could not be in his usual state of health, when he made an essay and talked after it, in a manner so unlike his usual self.

CHAPTER XI.

WE were all very much amused with Sir John Ellesmere's essay of twelve sentences on Hospitality. We planned to have a similar essay in the course of our next walk together, which took place on the following day. Mr. Milverton and Lady Ellesmere accompanied us. Sir Arthur thus led up to the subject:—

Sir Arthur. That was really a very creditable essay of yours, Ellesmere, which you gave us yesterday.

Mauleverer. The chief merit was its brevity.

Cranmer. I should like to suggest another subject which I know would please Mr. Mauleverer. What should you say to an essay on Vulgarity?

Mauleverer. No: don't take that, it would require hundreds of sentences to deal with it properly; and hardly anything worthy of it could be said in twelve sentences.

Ellesmere. One sentence is sufficient. I will engage to give you a single sentence on this subject; and whatever form of vulgarity you afterwards put before me, I promise that it shall be signified, or at least explained, by this single sentence.

Cranmer. This is an amazing man!

Ellesmere. I suppose that the peripatetic philosophers, when they had anything very important to say to their disciples, paused in their walk to do so.

We all stopped: then stood in front of Sir John as if we were a docile class of students, waiting to drink in the words of a master of sentences. It happened to be dinner-time for the rustic population. We were close to the corner of a field where a number of farm-labourers were ploughing for spring-corn; they peeped over the hedge at us, but no one saw them but myself. Ellesmere continued:—

Ellesmere. All vulgarity simply results from a want of self-confidence. If I were writing a book, I should put these words into double italics, if there are such things. Now, then, tell me, as we walk on, any form of vulgarity which is not expressed and explained by my single pregnant sentence.

Sir Arthur. Ostentation—whether of birth, wealth, rank, or ability of any kind?

Ellesmere. This is too easy to answer. Don't you see that if a man had self-confidence, if he even believed thoroughly in the force and worth of these social advantages, he would not require to be perpetually putting them forward, and making claims for them? No: it is the want of self-confidence which makes him so vulgar as to flaunt these advantages before the eyes of his fellow-men.

Mauleverer. Well, there is the vulgar vanity that is always putting itself forward—I mean personal vanity of all kinds; and note this, I mean the vanity which has no good grounds to go upon; and therein my problem differs from Sir Arthur's, for his advantages were real.

Ellesmere. Again, this is too easy to answer. The man in question has some merits. (Nobody is without merits, and without possible usefulness.) But he is deficient in self-confidence about his true merits—merits upon which he could really take his stand, and so he makes false and unreal claims for attention and respect.

Milverton. The boasting of grand acquaintanceships, the endeavour to prove that one is in a higher social circle than that in which one really moves.

Ellesmere. My dear fellows, don't be so absurdly easy in taking objections to my potent single sentence. If that is not an instance of the want of self-confidence, I don't know what is. The man in question has no sound faith in the merits and worth of the class or station to

which he belongs, and so he becomes pretentious, and boasts of any chance acquaintanceship with great people.

Johnson. Fussiness and want of reticence, so that a man tells you, perhaps in a railway carriage, all about himself and his family and his affairs.

Ellesmere. Our excellent Sandy has endeavoured to make a good point—and has made a better point than almost any of you; but he cannot beat me, or diminish the value of my sentence. He artfully endeavours to drag me into other regions. Fussiness is not vulgarity: want of reticence is not vulgarity. Take the last named thing. It often results from innocence of mind and from affectionateness. A child will tell you all about itself and its home goings on; and a child is never vulgar.

Milverton. Very good, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Yes, he says very good—when I answer his secretary's objection. He did not say so when I answered his own.

Lady Ellesmere. Outrageous dress—not all the colours of the rainbow, but those colours which will not harmonize together.

Ellesmere. Is not this intensely feminine! You can see how they pronounce against one another, merely founding their conclusions on the subject of dress, an all-important subject to them. I do maintain that I am not a vulgar man. All other faults you may impute to me, but not this. Nevertheless my wife is often pleased

to tell me that I am vulgar in the article of dress, simply because I love bright colours, and do not discern discordancy in colour where she perceives it. She does not know, poor woman, that this is a question of temperament. I will bet anything that Milverton, who has somewhat of a sombre mind, also delights in a profusion of bright colours.

Milverton nodded assent, Ellesmere continued:—

Now have I not answered my lady?

Cranmer. I don't wish to boast, but I do not think he will be able to answer me. There is a vulgarity of mind which was not included in any of the foregoing objections. It is not, as Sir Arthur said, connected with ostentation: it is not, as Mauleverer said, vanity: it has nothing to do with dress, or boastfulness of any kind.

Ellesmere. This is alarming.

Cranmer. It has no relation whatever to anything that has been said before. There is, I say, a vulgarity of mind which takes the vulgar view of everything presented to it. I don't know German, but I think I understand what the Germans mean when they say that a man is a Philister—a Philistine, as we should say. Mr. Matthew Arnold would, in his eloquent language, best express what I mean. I have seen it in official life; I have seen it in ordinary life. I cannot quite describe it to you, but

I am sure you all know what I am aiming at. It is, that in every affair with which he has to deal, the vulgar man takes the second-rate motive, the common-place motive, the one that is sure to go down with vulgar people such as himself.

Ellesmere. This is the hardest nut I have had to crack. I can only answer it in this way, that, as I believe, Cranmer's vulgar man sees the higher motive, but does not believe in its influence: has not the self-confidence which would enable him to appeal to that higher motive in others, and so becomes a Philister in spite of his better self.

Milverton. You must own, Ellesmere, that Cranmer has made a remark very difficult for you to answer.

Ellesmere. I will expand, or at least explain, my crucial sentence. Vulgarity proceeds from something negative, whereas most people seem to think that it proceeds from something positive. I have been pleased to perceive that no one of you has taken the point of vulgarity of language. A man may be deficient or redundant in his H's. This has nothing to do with vulgarity.

But to return to my main theme. My idea is not original. I gained it from Ruskin, or from a quotation which Milverton once made from him, in which that most eloquent writer said that "vulgarity was death," or words to that effect. That saying enlightened me at once. I saw that vulgarity was deficiency and not superabundance, though it may take the form of super-

abundance. And I believe that even Cranmer's objection, which is the hardest I have had to answer, will, when looked at by the philosophic mind, resolve itself into deficiency—deficiency of hope, of faith, of sympathy; and so it will, in a measure, come within the scope of my original sentence, that all vulgarity results from a want of self-confidence—of confidence either in one's ordinary self, or of the higher aspirations which belong to one's better self.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "Friends in Council" seemed, in the last few days, to have found out a new vein of thought, or rather a new mode of expressing their thoughts. These walks, which used to be rather avoided by some of the company, were now talked of beforehand and even the most indolent did not care to be absentees. For my part, I should have preferred more solid, indoors talk; but nobody agreed with me in that preference. The next day, we went out walking again, with the intention, I could perceive, of getting Sir John to enlighten us with some brief essay.

Sir Arthur. I, for one, have been greatly amused and pleased with the short essays Ellesmere has given us.

Cranmer. One can hardly call a single sentence an essay.

Ellesmere. No: would that essays had often consisted of single sentences. I am glad to have pleased Sir Arthur. Is there any other subject he would like to hear treated with becoming brevity? Like most juvenile authors, I am impatient to display my powers to the world.

Sir Arthur. Calumny!

Ellesmere. A commonplace subject. It has been treated over and over again; and, oddly enough, best treated in the *Figaro* of Beaumarchais. I could give you a subject not really akin to calumny, but by most people supposed to be first cousin to that vice.

Cranmer. Scandal? Backbiting?

Ellesmere. No. The originality of my subject consists in its being common as the air, and yet, as far as I know, never having been taken as a subject for an essay. It is "Denigration." This is a very different thing from calumny, or slander, or backbiting, or from any form of satire or sarcasm.

Sir Arthur. I think he is right. Now for the essay, Ellesmere, or for the essaylet, if I may so coin a word.

Ellesmere. I cannot treat it quite so briefly as I have treated the preceding subjects which have been entrusted to me; and I must think a little, before I attempt to give any discourse upon it.

Hereupon Sir John Ellesmere walked on at a rapid pace before us; and then, after a few minutes, returned to us.

"I am ready now," he said, "and, as Milverton is wont to say, 'I demand the strictest attention from you all,' for it is a very important subject which I am about to discuss." I will now give his own words.

Ellesmere. If you are honest men you will admit that whatever anybody says against any other body, has some effect upon your minds. Suppose you know that there is *malus animus* in the person speaking; suppose you know that the said person has no real cognizance of the subject, or of the man, of which, or of whom, that person is speaking—still, his speech produces some effect. For instance: a very young man is talking of some work in science, art, or literature, which you are well aware that he is utterly incapable of understanding, and has, probably, not read, or only read partially, you are still, if but in some slight degree, affected by what you are pleased to dignify as an adverse opinion. There is a vile gregariousness of thought and feeling which only the very greatest personages are able to withstand. Moreover (and here I utter a truth which is not far from being one of the most significant truths in the world), not one man

in five hundred is able to endure the painful process of keeping his judgment righteously in suspense. The smallest weight is often able to depress the scale one way or the other.

Luckily in my essays, or "essaylets," as Sir Arthur is pleased to call them, the author can endure interruption. Have I exaggerated the effect of this gregariousness of mind? Can any of you honestly say that you are not affected by hostile criticism, however absurd, ignorant, or irrelevant you know that criticism to be, and however much you may despise the critic?

You are silent. I am glad to see that you have consciences—active, energetic consciences—which enable you to recognize a truth when it is laid before you.

I proceed with my discourse.

Well would it be for the world if it were guided only by malevolence in its sayings and doings. I have a large acquaintance; but I hardly think that there is a really malevolent being among them. This knocks over (that is not a phrase of your solemn essayists)—this knocks over your calumny and your backbiting. They are very rare transactions, but denigration is as common as folly. And why is it so common? Because it is so easy. To praise, with anything like judgment, is the work of an artist. To condemn, to vilify, to denigrate is within every man's power. The village idiot, if you observe his sayings (I really speak from observation), generally blackens what he talks about. It is always

complaint and never praise that forms the staple of village idiots' maunderings.

Now you must not think that I am talking after the fashion of Mauleverer, who, if he were uttering this peripatetic essay, would tell you that the denigrator had in view the abundant malice and envy of mankind, and was accordingly talking with reference to the applause which would be elicited from that prevailing envy and malice. Nothing of the kind. The denigrator talks only what is easiest for him to talk. I go down to the depths of human nature; and I am fully aware of that fact, which most of you philosophers ignore, that man is a very indolent creature.

Shall I proceed?

Sir Arthur. Certainly.

Ellesmere. Well, then; man, an ordinary man, is a very unimaginative creature. When he contemplates a great work of any kind, be it in politics, religion, science, literature, or art, he approaches it with a prosaic and unimaginative mind. He has no conception—how should he?—of the labour overcome, of the multitudinous things which the writer, or the painter, or the scientific man has set aside, in the ultimate representation of what he has had to say, to announce, or to portray.

All human society is full of denigration from the foregoing causes which I have named. It is easy; it is natural; it is unimaginative; moreover, it is easily

understood. It is one of the most mischievous elements in the world; for it appeals to two of the most pregnant conditions in human intercourse—namely, ignorance and want of sympathy.

Sir Arthur. What a pity Sir John has given the best part of his mind to his legal studies!

Ellesmere. My legal studies, Sir Arthur, have taught me to observe these things. I never was more in earnest than in what I have said to you just now. You and Milverton and Cranmer are always propounding something or other which should be of great benefit to mankind—something legal, political, sanitary, or social—but I doubt whether anything would be of more benefit to mankind, would give more power to the men who are seeking to do their best for mankind, than putting a check upon this habit and spirit of denigration. Every reformer, from Luther upwards and downwards, has had to contend against it, as his greatest and most prevailing enemy.

And every good man should seek to assure himself thoroughly as to what he is doing, when he denigrates the efforts of any improver, reformer, inventor, or even would-be benefactor of the human race. Of course, I might have alluded to the common proverb, "Throw mud—some of it is sure to stick." The answer given is not satisfactory to me: namely, "That it will rub off when it is dry." It is at any rate a long time before it dries.

There is something I wish to add. We are greatly deluded by the use of grand words in this matter, such as "calumny," "scandal," and the like. I have used too fine a word in "denigration." I should like instead, if you would endure it, to use the word "black-washing." Now many a man, who has spent half his conversational time in black-washing, does not feel that he is in the remotest degree touched by any noble language you may employ against the grander vices of calumny and scandal-mongering. Any blame of this kind does not come near to him. He does not dislike anybody enough to calumniate him, or to invent scandal against him. He only propagates these evil things by carelessly and indifferently repeating them. True, he likes to take off the edge of a fine action by showing that some small or mean motive might have given rise to it. But this he considers to be very harmless; and, in short, he black-washes to a great extent without having any real consciousness of what he is doing. He furnishes a depressing kind of medicine that he thinks is very healthful for the world, which might otherwise be too much excited by the contemplation of any good work or noble endeavour.

Somehow or other the eyes of several of us took the direction of the place where Mr. Mauleverer was standing. Sir John perceived this.

Ellesmere. Now this is very rude of you. They think, Mauleverer, that my last sentences were aimed at you. Nothing of the kind. Mauleverer, my friends, is a man who has a great deal of spare darkness in his soul; and he possesses some of that power which a great poet has assigned to a certain personage—

"And where he gazed, a gloom pervaded space."

So, without in any way wishing to liken Mauleverer to that personage, we may still say that he has a power of throwing some of his darkness in whatever direction he is pleased to throw it; but he does not black-wash other people. He only casts a dark colour upon the human race in general, and does not condescend to vilify any individual, except perhaps an enthusiast or a philanthropist.

Now, Mauleverer, if you have any spare cash about you, I think I know of somebody who deserves to receive it as a fee for the defence of your calumniated character.

Mauleverer. I am quite indifferent to the supposed attack, and not peculiarly grateful for the defence. There is no knowing how far your enthusiasms (I do not accuse you though, Ellesmere, of enthusiasm) would carry you if it were not for my counteracting influence. Not that I play a part of counteraction; but I sincerely think that Milverton and Sir Arthur, who are the greatest sinners in this line, often put forward impos-

sibilities of hope and endeavour. I shall be very glad if it shall ever be proved that I am in the wrong.

Milverton. I cannot let Mauleverer off so easily as you do, Ellesmere—just because you wish to have him on your side at the present moment. When he abuses us poor men collectively, I do not see how we, as individuals, escape his censure. I do not see how any of us remain white when he "black-washes," to use your word, the whole human race. I never hear him make exceptions. You would think, to hear his diatribes, that we were all reptiles. His talk is so unmeasured, and, for the most part, turns upon so few particulars.

Mauleverer. Don't provoke me to say all that I could say, of man.

Ellesmere. You cannot disconcert us. I, for one, am thoroughly aware that he is not a perfect creature; but, upon the whole, by no means so despicable a creature as you would make him out to be. But say on. Tell us what you are pleased to think of man.

Mauleverer. Contemptible in his appetites, grovelling in his pursuits, absurd in his pleasures, most comical when meaning to be most serious; imitative as an ape, shameless as a dog; and as fond of following a crowd as the silliest of sheep; the serf to success, the slave of fashion; a creature who trades upon the few epidemic ideas of his age, which he in his conceit supposes to

be his own. In religion, for the most part, a superstitious idolater, or one who scarcely seems to think there is such a thing as Divine Government; hardly consistent for any single hour of his dreary life: but not on all these accounts unfitted for abiding in a planet wherein the most significant transactions are disease, devouring, decadence, and death.

Ellesmere. It is a very pretty description of man. I take exception to one phrase only, "shameless as a dog." I wish, that in fairness you had only shown how like to a dog he is, when he is at his best—how friendly, how affectionate, how forgiving.

Now I will tell you why that abusive bit about the dog was put in. It was to make the third section of a sentence, or of a paragraph—the third section of that sentence or paragraph wherein the ape and the sheep were spoken of. The love of mankind for the number three has been a fatal thing for them. It would be hard to recount how many false and injurious statements have entered into speech and writing, by reason of this love for a third section of a sentence. I should have fulfilled my mission in life (each one of us I hope has a mission), if I could persuade the world that truth is chiefly violated by this insertion of the third section. Of course, Sir Arthur would say that it is necessary for the sake of euphony. Euphony, then, is the mother of many lies.

Milverton. You can lower anybody or anything

by this exaggerating process of Mauleverer. For my part, as I have intimated to you before, my wonder is perpetual that mankind has made so good a thing of the very hard and trying circumstances around him; and the result of my experience is, astonishment that the selfishness of individual being has so little corrupted the primal elements of goodness which were inserted in man. Ludicrous as it may appear to you, Mauleverer, I would almost rest my defence of man upon the fact that in the theatre the most commonplace maxim of morality, the least approach to generosity of sentiment, is welcomed by the galleries with a shout of applause which shows that the hearts, even of the least educated of mankind, respond with fervour to anything that is great or good, however familiar, which is put before them.

Mauleverer. I can't admit that to be an able defence of human nature—that it is always ready to indulge in the cheap virtue of applauding clap-trap.

Milverton. Perhaps I can do something better. Let us take five or six of the men who are best known to the world. Now they shall not be saints or martyrs; or men especially renowned for goodness of any kind. I will choose them only from the fact that they happen to be well known to us—not their lives particularly, but themselves. A man's life often tells very little about the innermost nature of himself. It is a web into which so many extraneous threads are woven.

The men I will choose are Horace, Dante, Montaigne, Pepys, Dr. Johnson, and Rousseau.

Ellesmere. A queer collection. How they would have quarrelled!

Milverton. I don't know about that. All I contend for is, that there is much to admire and like in each of these men, however great their faults may have been. Do Mauleverer's words apply to them: "Grovelling in their pursuits, idiotic in their pleasures, the serfs of success, the sport of nature, atheists or bigots," I forget his precise words.

Sir Arthur. Pepys?

Ellesmere. The best chosen of all. Now, there is a book I have read—his diary—over and over again. I give Milverton great credit for choosing him. He does not pretend to be a mass of virtue; but, after all, how much good and worth there is in the fellow. I look upon that diary of his as the truest book ever written. Even when he condescends to conformity, you can see that he does not take in himself, or wish to take in any reader, if that diary was ever intended to be read. One day he goes in a barge with the king and the Duke of York. "Good Lord!" he says, "what poor stuff they did talk." Then recollecting that, as an official man, he must not, even to himself, run down his official superiors, he adds, "But, God be praised, they are both of them princes of marvellous nobleness and spirit." I won't swear to the exactness

of the words, but I am sure I give you a just idea of the passage.

There are only two others of Milverton's heroes, of whom I know anything—Horace and Dr. Johnson; and of them I must say that Milverton is right. They both tend to give us a favourable view of human nature.

Milverton. I confess, with all my admiration for Dr. Johnson, that he has one of the greatest faults which, to my mind, can beset a man. He seems to contradict for contradiction's sake. Now, what one desires to know, in one's converse with other men, is what they really think, not what they will say for the sake of provoking argument.

Ellesmere. I don't see that that is such a great fault.

Milverton. [Rather dryly.] I did not expect that *you* would. But have I not proved, or rather illustrated, my argument—namely, that the men you know best, into whose characters, from some reason or other, you have gained a particular insight, are by no means the contemptible creatures that Mauleverer would make them out to be? Of course one ought not to answer his diatribes seriously; but sometimes one is provoked into doing so. I can hardly believe that he himself believes in what he says.

Mauleverer. I do.

Sir Arthur. I do not think, Milverton, that you were particularly fortunate in naming Rousseau.

Milverton. I thought it but fair to name him, when I was looking out, which was my first thought, for those men of whom we know a great deal. I took care not to name any man of our own time, because that might have given rise to ill-natured sayings.

Well now, about Rousseau. Some of Mauleverer's sayings would hit him hard. He was a morbid creature, but penetrated with a desire for the improvement of mankind in his own way; and in that respect he was by no means an ignoble person.

You must admit that I was judicious in not fighting the battle on the merits of men acknowledged to have done some signal service to the world—of your Clarksons, Howards, Wilberforces, St. Francises, Borromeos, and the like. For the most part, I took what are called men of the world. Horace, Montaigne, and Pepys are really representative men of their class. Sir Arthur, do say something for Montaigne. You, of course, know all about him.

Sir Arthur. One of the best fellows in the world. How I should have liked to have had him here with us!—a very Christian man, without being at all aware, himself, of that fact. I wish he had not been quite so coarse; but if he had lived in our day he would not have been a coarse man at all. He would have been as fine a gentleman as the late Sydney Herbert, the finest gentleman I ever knew.

Mauleverer. I do not mind having every one against

me. I am used to that. I shall only make one remark in answer to the puffing up of mankind which you all indulge in.

Ellesmere. It's the first time I have ever been called a pufferup of mankind. Oh! don't apologise, I willingly accept the character. I always puff up Milverton to a large extent.

Mauleverer. My remark is simply this—that if you think that these men in their autobiographies, their diaries, or their other writings, give a true representation of themselves, you are much mistaken. Nobody dares to represent himself as he truly is. You may shout "oh! oh!" as much as you like; but it is so. Your Scriptures are with me. The men, inspired or otherwise, who have written most truly of their fellow-men, know that the heart of man is desperately wicked. You cannot bear to hear the truth, any of you.

Nobody cared to reply to Mr. Mauleverer; and somehow or other, as so often happens, the man who takes the darkest views of human life is not easily to be defeated. As Mr. Milverton said afterwards, "He disheartens, if he cannot conquer: he depresses, if he cannot prevail."

Our conversation subsequently diverged

into various channels; and, amongst other things, Mr. Milverton's previous essay was alluded to in the following manner.

Cranmer. I wish Milverton would not speak so vehemently as he does against Political Economy.

Ellesmere. It is very inconsistent of him. He worried my life out, when we were young men, urging me to read Adam Smith, and James Mill, and Ricardo, and a host of other political economists.

Sir Arthur. You do not understand him, and perhaps he does not quite understand himself. It is against the false application, or rather the unlimited application, of the maxims of political economy, that he means to fulminate.

Ellesmere. Yes: there is where it is, and that kind of error is perpetual. There is no maxim that can be applied without many modifications. Cranmer intimated to me, the other day, that I did not know much about science. Well; he is not far wrong. I took a tolerable degree, but have never had time to keep up with the scientific labours and discoveries of our day.

Sir Arthur was showing me yesterday, and translating for me, a beautiful passage of the great Humboldt's, in which that wonderful man says that, in the time of our youth or boyhood, the account of some place

strikes our imagination very forcibly, perhaps quite unreasonably, and we are ever afterwards pining to see this place.

A similar thing occurs in all the studies of the young. I read all the mathematics of my day, but it was one single trivial thing that happened to make the greatest impression upon me; and it thoroughly applies to the present subject. It relates to the inclined plane. There was the mathematical formula which gave the result of a weight descending this inclined plane. But then it was a mathematical inclined plane—not the inclined plane of actual life. With regard to the descent on that plane, friction had to be taken into account. That fact made an indelible impression upon my mind; and ever afterwards I have endeavoured to allow for "friction" in all human affairs. This is the main safeguard against pedantry; and it includes all that Milverton means, when he is attacking political economists.

Men will buy in the cheapest market. No, they won't; at least not for a long time.

Men are always guided by self-interest. No, they are not; for any given man is a mass of whims, humours, and prejudices, which intercept and even conquer the force of self-interest.

Man is a reasonable animal, and, of course, submits willingly to be bound by a chain of correct and severe reasoning. No, he does not; for, in that case, he would

always agree with me, and I do not find that he does always agree with me.

Put whatever maxim you choose before me, I will prove to you that it only applies when large modifications are added to it, when friction is taken into account.

We took Sir John at his word, and tried him with all manner of general maxims and proverbs; but he certainly was victorious in showing that, in every case, large modifications and many exceptions had to be made.

Mr. Cranmer is the only one of us who, in our conversations, is a persistent enemy to Sir John Ellesmere. "Well then," said Mr. Cranmer, "that single sentence which you gave us, as expressing and explaining all vulgarity, was not, after all, a general truth." Sir John is not easily disconcerted, but he seemed to be so for a moment. "At any rate," he replied, "not one of you could bring forward the exceptions and modifications that were necessary."

We were close at home when this was said, and there was no further conversation worth recording.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN in our first walk we were talking over subjects for essays, it was Mr. Mauleverer who proposed "Over-Publicity" as one of them. He was now asked to write an essay on that theme; but he declined to do so, saying "he had no idea that authorship was such hard work; and that, what with his letter to the American, which, however, had satisfactorily proved the exact equivalence of human folly at all periods of the world's history, and what with his essay on "Intrusiveness," which had proved that all men, even the greatest, would descend to a level of uniform stupidity, he thought he had done enough to enlighten and amuse the company.

Without recounting the conversation which

ensued, it is enough to say that it was mainly devoted, by the other friends, to showing Mr. Mauleverer that he had chiefly confined his essay to proving how intrusiveness affected great men; and, therefore, that it was an evil which did not much concern the world in general.

Finally, Sir Arthur undertook to write the essay on "Over-Publicity;" and the day came when he was to read this essay.

I wish that somebody besides myself could have seen the expression of mingled bewilderment, sarcasm, and impatience, on the face of Sir John Ellesmere (who was sitting behind Sir Arthur), during the beginning of Sir Arthur's essay. Sir John has a great respect for Sir Arthur, the respect of a comparatively unlearned man for a learned one; and, therefore, does not venture to interrupt him as he would any of the others.

Sir Arthur reads with a sonorous voice; and, when he quotes a bit of Latin, it is with a certain unctuous enjoyment of the text, which I have noticed in other scholars. I

often wish that I was a great scholar myself, for they seem to enjoy their Latin and Greek amazingly. Now my chief, Mr. Milverton, takes all things which serve his purpose with equal satisfaction; and he is just as emphatic with a quotation from a dull blue-book as from a Greek tragedy.

Sir Arthur read as follows:—

OVER-PUBLICITY.

"The great Pan is dead." No legend with more depth of meaning and more conciseness of expression, ever pervaded the world than that which told of this announcement to mankind, that the great Pan was dead. Our Saviour was expiring upon the cross; and over all lands and all seas the dread but holy and joyful fact was being announced, that the power of Pan had ceased, and that the great Pan himself was dead. No more dubious oracles; no more jubilant dancing and singing of nymphs, and fauns, and satyrs, headed by the great Pan

himself, and making all the woods and groves resonant with somewhat uproarious melody. No more Curetes; no more Corybantes, who should drown the expression of grief, sorrow, and pain, by their odious din, beating with clubs upon brazen shields, or upon empty helmets.

> "Pars clypeos sudibus, galeas pars tundit inanes:
> Hoc Curetes habent, hoc Corybantes opus."

But I say that the great Pan has come to life again, for he is to be regarded as the god, still enamoured of the nymph Echo, who will not allow of silence, nor of solitude, even in the most solitary of woods and groves. Neither are the Curetes, nor the Corybantes, extinct existences. They still make their wild clamour to drown all that is most tender and most touching in the proceedings of mankind. Nay, to speak the truth, the great Pan, the Curetes, and the Corybantes, have more power in the world than ever; and they may well be called the divinities and the high priests of publicity.

Alas! we can no longer say as that true poet Wieland says in his "Oberon:"—

"Es iſt ſo ſtille hier, als ſei der große Pan
Geſtorben. Tönte nicht der Hufſchlag unſrer Pferde,
Ich glaube, daß man gar den Maulwurf Scharren hörte."

Nothing now is sacred. Sorrow, disease, misfortune—all are canvassed with minuteness before the eyes of an unwholesomely curious world; greedy of novelties, delighting in sensation; and no real or imaginative detail is spared, for the public dearly loves details.

One writes to one, or speaks to one, or whispers to one; and the writing, or the speech, or the whisper is not meant for the whole world, and should never be given to the whole world. But, alas! in modern times there seems to be always a chorus present; and so the writing of one to one, or the speaking of one to one, or the whispering of one to one, tends no longer to have something peculiar or confidential in it, but is treated as if it were originally meant to be announced to the whole universe.

Some persons have thought that the Greek chorus is rather an impertinence; but this, at least, might be said for it, that it mostly consisted of citizens who were deeply interested in the fates and fortunes of the different actors on the stage. Whereas, in modern times, the chorus consists, for the most part, of persons who are very remotely interested in the proceedings of the principal actors—a chorus of curiosity rather than of sympathy.

I should wish to show you how, in the best of times, and among the best of people, most of their writing, or their speech, or their whispers, were intended only for those to whom they addressed themselves; and how it has now become a painful fact that no one can address another with any security that what he says, or writes, or even whispers, shall not be made the property of the universal world.

It is a pleasant and instructive, and, at the same time, to my knowledge, a true story, that a thorough coxcomb was wont to say of

two of the most distinguished men of this generation, that, "for his part, whenever he met them, they seemed to talk uncommon nonsense"—the truth being, that these two great men accommodated their talk to the person they were talking with, not regarding him as one of a chorus; but the smaller man talks always to the chorus, knowing, full well, that whatever he says, may attain a publicity for which he wishes to be prepared.

We must always be glad that Shakespeare did not live in these times of relentless publicity. We might have known a great deal too much about him, and his super-eminent greatness might have been much detracted from, at least in the opinion of ordinary persons.

There are two great evils which inevitably arise from the present state of things. There is the fear of publicity, and there is the love of publicity. As regards the former, how many timid and shame-faced persons fear to take the right course, fear to take the course which would lead to just results,

because of the aversion which they have to this demon of publicity?

On the other hand, a still greater danger lurks in the love of publicity, which comes to be a besetting sin, sometimes even of the greatest minds, and which leads to falseness, restlessness, and to a most dangerous desire always to stand well with that public which is sure, very soon, to be made acquainted with all that the lover of publicity may say, or speak, or intend.

Publicity is also a great absorber of that time which might be much better spent. The desire for knowing everything about everybody—what he or she thinks, or says, or does, on any trivial occasion—occupies now a large part of the time of the civilized world; and must be a great hindrance to steady thought about a man's own concerns, and about those subjects which ought most deeply to interest mankind. A stupid kind of gossip becomes the most pleasant and the most absorbing topic for the generality of men. I do not agree with a certain friend of mine, who

has told us that "the folly of mankind is a constant quantity;" but I *do* admit that this fulsome publicity I have described, is one of the facts which speaks most in favour of the view he has been taking.

If publicity could be perfect, there would be less to be said in its disparagement. If every one wore his heart upon his sleeve, we should at least get rid of all falseness, and the world would know with whom and with what it was dealing. But a studied publicity is very dangerous. When all people know that what they may say, or do, is likely to be made public, they will dress up their sayings, or their doings, to meet this appalling publicity. And that which they deem will not be pleasing to the public, though it may be the thing, of all others, which the public ought to hear, they will carefully suppress.

A studied and arranged publicity is the nearest friend to insincerity.

A man who feels that he has any peculiar worth or force in himself, should set his mind

strongly against this publicity, for it is very ruinous to him. He is not so very different from other men; but, perhaps, he has some insight, or some capability, which is not given to them. Whatever power he naturally possesses, is injured, or depreciated, by the extreme publicity which, in these days, attends *all* his sayings and doings. A great man talks his own nonsense at his own home: when told to the world it tends greatly to lower his influence in those matters in which he ought to have influence. Familiarity is the great leveller, and a most unjust leveller. It was, indeed, a divine saying, that a prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and amongst his own kin, and in his own house. Extreme publicity makes the whole nation the familiar home of any great or original person. The specialities of great men are thus partially negatived.

I conclude this essay by saying that this extreme publicity is a snare and a temptation for the great; that it tends to destroy the

just privacy of private life; that it furnishes a worthless occupation for mankind in general; and that it is unwholesome, tedious, detractive, indelicate, and indecorous.

Ellesmere. Is there not a little inconsistency here? You say that this extreme publicity is everything that is odious and abominable: and then you say, "carry it farther, make it perfect, and it is excellent."

Milverton. No, no, no, Ellesmere. He says this extreme publicity, as to what a man says, or does, or intends, is odious and mischievous. But *not as to what he thinks*. Sir Arthur's main point, so far as I understood him, was that this publicity concealed thought, or at least deformed or misrepresented it. If I may use the expression, Sir Arthur's original and thoughtful man is made, by this publicity, to think at the public, not *for* them.

My objection to the essay is, that I did not hear of a single instance in which publicity might be useful. Now, surely, it can render us enormous service. I maintain that it is a good thing, occasionally, to bring the knowledge of horrors home to the world. In former days, for example, quiet, home-staying people knew very little of the horrors of war. In other things, too, there was great ignorance of what ought to have been known. We had to rely upon some one man, such as a Howard, to tell us of the horrors of prison

life. We had to rely upon some few men, your Clarksons and Wilberforces, to tell us of the horrors of slavery and the slave-trade. Imagine the present state of publicity to have existed a hundred years ago. Large reforms in many matters would have been initiated much sooner. It never will do to suppose that any great phase of human affairs is altogether injurious. Sir Arthur naturally pictures to himself how much he, and other men like himself, are vexed and annoyed by this publicity. But I must recall to him the advantages which attend it.

Ellesmere. Oh! it is the usual story. There was the fault to which almost every proverb, every essay, every treatise (except those on medicine), every book (not excepting those on theology), is liable, namely, that when it attacks anything, it is the abuse and not the use which it attacks. There is nothing perfect in this life in the way of argument but a well-argued law case, heard before the judges *in banco*, or the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or the House of Lords. Yes, you may all laugh, but it is so. How often have I wished, when listening to a really good discussion upon some deep subject, that it could be put in the shape of a law case, and argued accordingly.

Cranmer. But there is the House of Commons, Ellesmere. There are surely two sides there—two bodies of opposing advocates.

Ellesmere. Yes; but no judges. However, I don't

want to cavil at Sir Arthur's essay. There was a great deal of it, with which I entirely agreed. I did not see much use in bringing in the great god Pan and the Corybantes; but everybody must tell his story, and make his essay, in his own way. And, perhaps, we should not have had the essay at all, if Sir Arthur had not at once seen how a classical quotation might be delicately brought in.

What I did like, was where he said so much about "one writing, or speaking, to one, and to no other." We certainly do destroy that one-to-oneness, by what he called, "a relentless publicity." I thought of Hotspur and the coxcomb who came up to him after the battle. How differently he would have talked to a man of war, had such a one accosted him! I feel that I talk different talk to each one of you, when I am alone with each one. I am obliged to be very solemn, if Milverton deigns to accompany me for half a mile. For Sir Arthur, I rub up my classics, and talk of Apuleius, as if he were a friend of mine, though I only know him by name. For Cranmer, I pretend to have read a blue-book, or at least indicate a respect for blue-books. When I am alone with Mauleverer, there is a soup which I once tasted at Lord G.'s that I always contrive to bring upon the *tapis*. And, in fact, though not a very false man, I am obliged to accommodate myself to my company.

Milverton. I remember a signal instance in which

this writing of one to one was fearfully misconstrued. I dare say I have told it you before. A great wit and author, of the preceding generation, wrote a letter to a certain statesman with whom he was very intimate; and the two men were full of their jokes to one another. In this letter the author made a most rascally proposition. I am certain, from having known something of both these men when I was young, and known how full they were of their fun, that this proposition had reference to some old joke of theirs; and, in fact, to use a word common now-a-days, the author was chaffing the statesman. But it was all taken by the world as real earnest, and it did the memory of the great author some damage.

Mauleverer. I approved a little of the latter part of the essay, where Sir Arthur spoke about familiarity.

Lady Ellesmere. I do not know whether a hero remains a hero to his valet, but I suspect he often does, with all his failings, to his wife.

Mrs. Milverton. Not so very often, my dear.

Milverton. Carlyle's shrewd answer that "the hero is not a hero to his valet, because the valet is a valet, and not because the hero is not a hero," does not exhaust that question. To far other persons besides the valet by reason of his valetism, does the hero often cease to be a hero. This is a matter well worth considering. Sir Arthur indicated the cause, but I thought he did not work it out. Heroism, or greatness of any

kind, generally depends upon what we might call an exaggeration, or certainly an extreme, in some high or noble quality. The bystander will insist upon there being a co-ordinate greatness throughout the character; but, of course, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred there is nothing of the kind. The hero has most of the ordinary weaknesses of his fellow-men. The close-seeing bystander is horribly disappointed at finding such to be the case, and gradually commits the enormous error of detracting somewhat from the merit of the hero's real greatness in that quality in which he is great. It all arises from that stupid idea of expecting perfection, or at any rate, proportionate merit: whereas, by the nature of the case, there is disproportion.

Ellesmere. Very well brought out. You shall be the counsel for the hero. With me on the other side, and a good judge to hear us both, the verdict would be truth itself.

Sir Arthur. There is one form that publicity takes which is particularly odious to me. It is the publication of all the details of courtship and of love in "Breach of Promise of Marriage" cases.

Ellesmere. You little know, Sir Arthur, what a dangerous topic you have touched upon. It is one of Milverton's many manias to regard all such cases as an abomination.

Milverton. There ought to be no such cases. It is perfectly monstrous that any person should be compelled

to marry by any such pecuniary considerations. If any thing in the world should be a matter of complete assent on both sides, it is marriage; and even, at the last moment, if there is any reluctance on either side, the project should fall to the ground.

Ellesmere. I like that word "project."

Mauleverer. The present state of the law presumes, just as if it were a writer of second-rate novels, that marriage must be felicitous. The annals of the world do not quite bear this out.

Milverton. No; but look what a degrading thing it is for any man, or woman, to ask for compensation in regard to a matter in which the affections alone ought to be concerned.

If I were a lawyer on the defendant's side, I should contend that we are the people who ought to have the money, for we have probably prevented a most infelicitous marriage; and something is due to us for this great service to the other side. They were well rid of us, and might well show their gratitude in a substantial manner.

Ellesmere. Oddly enough, in the few breach of promise cases in which I have been concerned, I have always been on the plaintiff's side, otherwise I certainly had intended to take the Milvertonian view of the question.

Milverton. Oh! it is rank, it is sordid, it is abominable, to seek for money compensation in such matters. It savours of the most barbarous times, when

everything could be paid for, from the putting out of an eye up to murder. If Mauleverer had given this breach of promise business as an instance of the continuous folly of mankind, I should have been so far with him. I do not know for certain how the matter stands as regards other nations; but I rather think that we are the only people, pretending to be civilized, who retain this low-minded, barbarous practice.

Ellesmere. It is a great delight to me when Milverton comes forward in his real character as a downright domineering kind of man, intolerant in speech as in thought. It is quite a relief to get rid of that affectation of supreme fairness, of "nothing is as bad as it looks," and "there are two sides to every question," and "please to have the goodness to look at the other side," with which he mostly favours us.

Milverton. I have taken no notice of Ellesmere's injurious sayings; but, in order to have a noble and a just revenge, I propose to give you an essay on the subject of Ridicule, and, chiefly, on that low form of it called "chaffing," in which it must be admitted our friend here is an adept.

Ellesmere. I have no objection. An essayist only shows, for the most part, how one-sided a view he has taken of the question upon which he proposes to deliver a judgment.

Sir Arthur. I dare say I have been very one-sided in this essay of mine about Publicity. I do not intend to

defend it against all comers. I merely put down my own poor thoughts, and left the discussion to the rest of you.

One quotation in support of my views I shall give to you. It is not a classical quotation, Ellesmere. I was very tired last night after inditing this essay, and so full of it, that I thought I should not go to sleep without reading something which would take me away from the course of thought I had been indulging in. I agree with Mauleverer, that authorship is a very difficult thing. A practised writer, such as Milverton, has no conception of the difficulty it is for us who are not practised.

Ellesmere. Yes: upon every earthly or heavenly subject, Milverton has his ideas neatly arranged for production at any given moment.

One of our committee at the club took me down the other day into the club kitchen. It is a surprising place. There are boxes of mutton chops; there are drawers full of delicate cutlets ready for cooking; and, in short, everything was in the highest state of neat preparation. That is like Milverton's mind. Boxes full of arguments for his side of the question; drawers full of metaphors to illustrate those arguments; and, in a snug corner of his roomy mind, a neat little repository of sophisms. Whereas, nothing is prepared with me. You come in for a family dinner. You have a nice cut of wholesome leg of mutton—sometimes a little over-done, sometimes a little under-done, but a genuine thing—none of your made dishes and kickshaws.

Lady Ellesmere. A more vulgar simile I never heard, John.

Ellesmere. Homely, my dear, very homely; but not vulgar.

Sir Arthur. When Ellesmere interrupted me with his kitchen simile, I was going to tell you what happened to me last night. Now, have you not observed, that when one has any subject in one's mind, everything one hears or sees seems to bear upon it? Passengers in a railway-carriage appear to have chosen it as their especial theme. The very cabmen talk to you about it.

Last night I meant to have got away from my subject, and I asked Milverton to give me a book to divert me. He gave me a novel of Ludwig Tieck's. I am sure he did it without any malice prepensé, but it all related to my subject; and, instead of soothing me, it spoilt my night's rest. The witty Ludwig might have written my essay for me. Here is one of the most crucial passages. I will first read it to you in German.

Ellesmere. Please don't.

Sir Arthur. Yes, I must.

"Alles, was unser Leben schön machen soll, beruht auf einer Schonung, daß wir die liebliche Dämmerung, vermöge welcher alles Edle in sanfter Befriedigung schwebt, nicht zu grell erleuchten."

Now I will give you the translation:—"All that tends to beautify our life, rests upon our forbearing to illuminate with too bright a glare the lovely twilight, under

the influence of which all that is noble floats around us in soft contentment."

It is a difficult passage to translate, for there happen to be one or two words in it for which you can hardly find any corresponding words in English—such as Befriedigung, and Schweben; but, even with my poor translation, you may perceive what a depth of truthfulness there is in the passage, and how it applies to love, to friendship, and the admiration for greatness. You also cannot fail to see that an immature and relentless publicity brings into the soft twilight that hard and garish light that may prove fatal to our just admiration of all that is really admirable.

Sir Arthur rose, as if to deprecate any further remarks upon his essay, and we followed him into the garden, where the conversation took quite another turn, namely, as regards the relative merits of the Oxford and Cambridge crews. Ellesmere, who always takes what appears likely to be the losing side, maintaining that his men, the Oxford crew, were, after all, the best men, considering the disadvantages under which they laboured. He was ready to bet upon them to any amount.

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS morning we met to hear Mr. Milverton's essay on Ridicule. Before he began to read it, Sir John had taken up his place in a corner of the room, in an attitude of ostentatious humility.

Milverton. Pray come nearer to the table, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. No: this essay is meant as a punishment for me, and I am ready to receive the punishment with proper humility.

Milverton. Nonsense: it has nothing to do with you. I do not mean to say that you are not a little too fond of ridicule to please my taste; but then your choice of attack is never a mean one. Your victims, or rather intended victims, are chiefly your wife, Cranmer, Mauleverer, and my unfortunate self. With the exception of your contests with the last-named person, you seldom come off so victoriously as to have anything to boast of; and, as for myself, I am so used to being

attacked by you, that I have become callous, and take but little heed of all your ridicule.

Ellesmere. How much more wicked a thing contempt is than ridicule! What says Wordsworth?—an author I know by heart—at least, I wish I did:—

> "that he who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used; that thought with him
> Is in its infancy."

But begin: I shall not come out of the corner until I have heard the essay, which, say what you like, is, I know, made for me and against me.

Milverton. My dear fellow, it would be a most inhuman, as well as a most unpolite thing, to read an essay against a man in his own house. The laws of hospitality, which apply to guests as well as to hosts, forbid any such proceeding.

Mr. Milverton then read the following essay:—

RIDICULE.

There are various ways and forms in which men dispense their criticism of others. There is advice, satire, sarcasm, scorn, mockery, ridicule, and chaff. The last-named is a

modern word; but the thing itself is not modern, though it has greatly increased, and been greatly developed in modern times.

It has been said that if three persons were left on a desert island, two of them would contrive to make a slave of the third. I do not know how this may be; but it is pretty nearly certain that two of them would combine to ridicule the third, and would indulge largely in that peculiar form of ridicule, called chaff.

This subject may seem a small and insignificant one; but it is neither small nor insignificant, if the amount of human happiness which is at stake be duly considered. It is very noticeable that, in any assemblages of men, a large element of what may be called teazing is sure to arise; and the worst of this teazing is, that it is seldom equally distributed; but certain persons in the assemblage are almost invariably chosen as permanent victims.

The young suffer from it very much. In fact, it often adds greatly to the discomfort

of their lives. They do, or say, something which is odd, or unconventional, or misappropriate, or they meet with some ludicrous accident, or misadventure, which costs them agonies at the time, and which they wish to forget, and very much desire that others also would forget. But this is not allowed; and a system (one can hardly use any lesser word) is set up of chaffing, which has for its basis this unlucky accident, or misadventure, or misappropriate speech.

Probably nothing more ungenerous can be imagined, than this mode of proceeding on the part of the majority. But it is not by showing its want of generosity that it will be lessened, or its effects upon the victim diminished.

There are, however, considerations which may tend to lessen its frequency, and to diminish its effect.

In the first place, it is to be observed that improvement is not aimed at; and, indeed, seldom or ever enters at all as a motive into the minds of the tormentors of the victim.

This can hardly be said of any other form of dispensing criticism. A satirist, for instance, has generally some idea of improving mankind by his satire. Of course the advice-giver, really and sincerely, often has the same motive. And certainly no other form of criticism is so entirely devoid of good intention as this chaffing.

Then, again, it is peculiarly hard, cruel, and offensive, by reason of its evoking no deep feeling in the breast of those who indulge in it. There is no reaction. The scornful man is, for the most part, as excited by his scorn, as are the victims of that scorn. The satirist, if he has any real gift for satire, feels deeply, and shows that he feels, the vexation with the things or persons that evoke his satire. The *sæva indignatio* of Swift lacerated himself more, perhaps, than it did any of his victims.

Now there is some comfort in this counter agitation; but the light kind of ridicule, which forms our present subject, reserves all its pain for those who are its victims, and

has not any to spare for those who make use of it.

Now comes a consideration of the thing itself, which may serve as a means of limiting its frequency and lessening its effect.

Its sole power, at any rate its chief power, consists in repetition. It requires no wit. It requires no novelty. The dullest person in the world has only to reiterate, and he becomes an adept in this art of annoyance. In fact, the more stupid and unimaginative he is, the more sure he becomes of holding a distinguished place as a tormentor of this kind.

You cannot by the utmost stretch of fancy imagine any great man rivalling a stupid person in this peculiar species of tormenting. Indeed, you cannot imagine a great man adopting it at all. Let us mention the names of great men, and see whether you can picture them, even in your wildest fancies, as practising, still less as excelling in, this horrible art. Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, Burke, Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson—who can fancy

any of these men condescending to this form of ridicule? And still less who can imagine their showing such a want of generosity as to make one man the especial victim of it. Dr. Johnson might be ever so rude; but his rudeness did not take this inferior form, and was addressed equally to all, without any regard of persons.

This short essay might not have been written, but for a scene of which the writer was lately witness in the streets of London. He was walking behind two boys. The elder of them was a great, coarse, uncouth lad, about the age of sixteen, with a very brutal countenance. The other was a delicate boy, with a very sweet countenance, about the age of thirteen. He had either suffered from some serious injury or some severe disease, which had left a frightful mark, not perfectly healed, upon the left side of his cheek. To this unpleasant fact the elder boy was constantly referring in terms so coarse and horrid, that I cannot repeat them. He would withdraw a little from his com-

panion, point at him, and repeat in loud tones, with hideous laughter, the injurious words.

What the younger felt might be inferred by the red colour which rose round the scarred cheek. But he walked on in silence, bearing all those insults, if so it may be said, manfully. The expression, however, of the boy's face, and even a certain tremulousness in his walk, betrayed the suffering that he endured and the indignation that he felt.

Except when seeing a dumb animal suffering under some man's brutal treatment, I never longed so much to knock anybody down, as I did that elder boy; but I restrained myself. I was convinced that they were either near relations, or from something which they both carried, I concluded that they were servants of the same master. If, therefore, I interfered, might it not be worse for the younger boy, as this was evidently not a chance meeting, and they were probably daily companions? Still I

followed them, dubious as to whether I should ultimately interfere.

Not for a moment did the elder one, the ruffian, cease from his vile taunts, repeating them exactly in the same words.

The road had luckily been mended close to the spot where the lads were walking. For once in my life I rejoiced that the inhuman practice of mending roads with sharp bits of granite, and not rolling them afterwards, had prevailed in this vicinity. The younger lad, who had now been told about twenty or thirty times, in the coarsest language, that he was hideous and loathsome, caught up one of these sharp pieces of granite, faced his companion, and threw it at him.

I agree with Charles Lamb, that a bully is not always a coward. In this instance, however, the bully was a coward. The younger lad, having now given way to his fury, caught up more of these sharp stones, pursued his tormentor; and the end of it was, to my great delight, a complete victory over the young ruffian.

Now here is a striking instance of this species of ridicule, this thing they call by the vulgar name "chaff," carried to its uttermost. Something in the way of misfortune happens. All reasonable or kindly persons never even think of alluding to it; but a low-minded creature, whose only idea of wit or jocosity is to give others pain, and to make himself exquisitely disagreeable, is able by constant and inane repetition, to cause pain and to evoke resentment.

It is very well for those who indulge in this, the most abject form of ridicule, to say that they should never have behaved like this elder boy. According to their rank of life they behave just as badly. They love to make a butt of some harmless person who, however, must maintain his composure, and is seldom able to pick up sharp stones in the road and hurl them at his tormentors.

The cause of torment may be much less coarse and obvious: the constrained suffering may not be one whit the less than that

which this poor boy endured till he could bear it no longer.

For my part, I see no difference in the ill-nature which, however different in form and expression, is in spirit and in substance the same.

This writer is not at all of the mind of Sir Oliver Roundhead, who never laughed himself, and never permitted any of his family to laugh. On the contrary, I think that some of the chief things that make life palatable, is the fun, the wit, the drollery, that pervade it. But then there must be no touch of malice; there must be nothing which gives any human being real pain. If there is anything of this kind, I fail to see the fun, or the drollery, or the wit. Even if it is there, it is absorbed, to my mind, and rendered negative, by the fact that a human being is suffering under it. Look at the delicate wit and humour of those who have been the greatest humourists in the world. Consider the writings of Montaigne and Charles Lamb. There is nothing in

them to give any human being pain, and yet they are convulsively amusing. If anybody is treated severely by these authors, it is their own selves.

Montaigne, if I recollect rightly, says somewhere, "there are as many absurd things to be told about me as about any man alive;" and no doubt that exquisite humourist enjoyed to a certain extent his own absurdities. So of Charles Lamb: in all his "whimsies" and comicalities you see in the background his own droll figure. But recollect that few men are humourists of this exalted kind, who can enjoy the anomalies and absurdities in which they themselves come forward as the prominent actors.

The majority of men have an exceeding dislike to appearing ridiculous, never having appreciated the full comedy of life, and that it must either be treated as comedy or tragedy, or, perhaps, as a nice admixture of both.

To bring the foregoing remarks home

to our present subject, when any of those ludicrous little mishaps occur which are described in witty works of fiction, or in comic periodicals, how painful they are to the principal actor in the scene, and how little he likes to hear of them again. When a young man enters a ball-room with his trousers tucked up; when a grave, wise man, like Pickwick, enters the wrong bed-room; when, as I once saw myself, a middle-aged lady comes down to breakfast having some stray locks still in the confinement of curl-papers, these unfortunate people by no means like to be reminded of their misadventures. There is really no fun, only cruelty, in reminding them of their heedlessness; and, indeed, it becomes a kind of torture, if this is repeated *ad nauseam*.

That great artist, Dickens, took care that none of Mr. Pickwick's companions, owing him respect, should venture to allude to that deplorable and shocking incident in good Mr. Pickwick's adventures.

And this present writer would not dare to allude to the misfortune of that respectable middle-aged lady who, in absence of mind, had forgotten to release some of her locks from their nightly imprisonment, if she had not long ago passed away from this troublesome world.

As, however, I have before intimated, it is the young who most feel having on any occasion made themselves absurd or ridiculous. The middle-aged man, unless he is a most fortunate individual, has gone through so much trouble, that these minor misfortunes of his youth are food for laughter for him as well as other people. Not always, though. A man in "the sere and yellow leaf" of life, has confessed to me that he feels hot all over, and knows that the colour is mounting to his face, when he remembers some of the most ludicrous adventures of a trivial kind in his early life. The sensitive, alas! are always sensitive; and even old age fails to harden them.

It is an old and hackneyed quotation, but there is a fearful amount of truth in it, which says :—

> "Of all the ills the human race endure,
> How small a part that laws or kings can cause or cure."

This is a very melancholy reflection if you come to take in all the force of it. The wisest and the best of men might come into the fullest power in a State; but all that they could do, except perhaps in sanitary legislation, tends comparatively little to lighten the real burdens of mankind. It is in purely social matters, in matters concerning the daily intercourse of life, that any great improvement of man's happiness is to be looked for. And that happiness will be most surely promoted by each individual compelling himself, or herself, to think how much everything he or she does conduces to make, or mar, the happiness of those who are nearest to them. That happiness may be greatly interfered with by an indulgence in the habit, here sought to be checked, of making fun by

means of mere brutal repetition of anything which, in the first instance, was painful to a fellow-creature.

Ellesmere. The essay has raised in my mind a profound question—Has any man ever been punished half so much for saying, throughout his life, the thing that is not, as for saying the thing that is? There is a subject for an essay for you!

As usual, this essay is a lop-sided thing.

Sir Arthur. Yes, Milverton, though thoroughly approving of most of what you have said, I must own that you have not given us the other side of the question. One would think, to hear you, that that great solvent of folly, ridicule, was never to be applied. And, as regards the particular form of ridicule, described by that somewhat vulgar word "chaffing," you have not given us any of its merits.

Cranmer. I fail to see any good whatever in it.

Sir Arthur. I do *not* fail. Now, for instance, when it is applied by an older and wiser man to younger persons, it is often meant to be very kind; and what is more, it is meant to be a substitute for the exercise of mere dictatorial authority. To bring the example nearer home, a father of a family notices some folly prevalent among the younger branches of the family. Being a kind-hearted man, he does not like to say, "Don't do

this," "Don't do that," which imperious orders he knows may suppress the folly, but will not eradicate it. Consequently he makes a little fun of the affair; perhaps reiterates the fun; and Milverton is a deadly enemy to this reiteration, which, however, may be necessary to produce the desired effect.

Mauleverer. That would be a great deal better than irony, a mode of ridicule I detest. It always seems to me a peculiarly ungenerous mode; and I have observed that it very rarely gains its purpose.

Milverton. I see you are all against me; but now, would it not be better that there should be grave and serious talk, even if it amounts to reprehension, rather than this somewhat undignified mode of chaffing?

Ellesmere. No, it would not. Almost, by the hypothesis, it is assumed that the subject-matter is not a serious one, and therefore does not require all this dignified seriousness in dealing with it.

But let us remove the matter from the home. There are a set of people living much together. One or more of them entertains, or entertain, what the others think to be absurd or exaggerated notions about something. They are equals, mind you. Your grave advice and dignified seriousness would be thought, and would be, somewhat of an impertinence as addressed by any one member to any other of the small community. But ridicule, especially if it takes the shape of fun, may be much more safely administered. Now, to be very personal,

I have often really objected to the views of our present essayist upon various economical and social subjects. I think, to speak very candidly, that his enthusiasm has sometimes led him a little astray—that he has underrated difficulties; that he has exaggerated the power of his proposed remedies; and, in short, that all that he has said is by no means to be taken for gospel.

I own that I have not had the same knowledge that he has, of the subjects in question; but I can perceive defects and redundancies in his way of treating them. Is it not better that I should put forward my views somewhat jokingly, somewhat mockingly, if you like to call it so, rather than that I should ride the high horse, as it were, and take him seriously to task, as if I were the master of the situation? I am speaking very seriously now.

Milverton. Yes; this is all very well; but it really does not apply to what I have said in the essay. The idea of persecution ran through it, or was meant to run through it; and, for once that this form of ridicule I have been inveighing against, is employed in a good and serious spirit, it is used a hundred times for the mere pleasure of mockery and for the love of teazing. I do not altogether exculpate Ellesmere from that latter motive having sometimes been a predominant one with him.

Lady Ellesmere. You are very hard upon Leonard. I am sure he is right as to the rarity of a good motive

for the peculiar form of ridicule he has been attacking. I do not say that the motive is always malicious. It is very seldom so perhaps; but it generally shows a thorough carelessness of other people's feelings. I think you may observe that we women seldom use it; and, for this reason, we perceive, much more quickly than you rude men do, when any person is suffering from mental pain.

Mrs. Milverton. Certainly, my dear.

Lady Ellesmere. You spoke of the father of a family, Sir Arthur, making use of this kind of ridicule. The mother would not deal with the follies of the children in that way. We have not avoided what is personal in this talk. I often see that our boy does not quite understand his father's jesting ways; but, if it were not vain to say so, I think I can produce the greater effect in my humble way, which has never a touch of ridicule in it.

Then, to look at the matter in a broader light. You know as well as possible, all of you, that there is a disposition, when you men or boys get together, to make a butt of some poor fellow. And not always, for his demerits. Very often for his scrupulousness; for his delicacy; for his affectionateness; and because he will not join in something which is wrong, or unfair, or unkind: but which the vulgar notions of his little community tolerate, or even think very fine. That is what Leonard was aiming at; and you know it,

and you take little points against him, and pretend to believe, that in any short essay of this kind, he could have exhausted the whole subject of ridicule.

Ellesmere. Well done, Dame Ellesmere! but you need not be so tempestuous. I simply pointed out that he had not exhausted the whole subject. Perhaps it was superfluous to mention this; but I do not think it was very wicked, or deserved all this scornfulness.

Milverton. Mildred has taken my part so admirably, that I need say but little more. One thing, however, I will say, and that is, that if there were more love in the world, there would be a great deal less of this kind of ridicule. We measure men's capacities very wrongly. The thing which makes one man greater than another, the quality by which we ought to measure greatness, is a man's capacity for loving; and the greater this capacity, the less, I maintain, would be his employment of ridicule to effect any good purpose.

Ellesmere made no reply, merely shrugged his shoulders. Perhaps he thought that the conversation was becoming a little too serious. The others also were silent; and we were about to separate, several of our party having to go to London that day, when Sir Arthur suddenly said:—

Sir Arthur. I must tell you a story which came into my mind while Milverton was reading his essay. I hope thus to redeem my credit with Lady Ellesmere, for the story will decidedly tell in Milverton's favour, while, at the same time, it indicates some of the limits which I should wish to place to those sayings of his which seemed to me rather unguarded.

The story is in one of Hans Christian Andersen's books. He calls it a "Picture-book without Pictures."

The Moon comes to a solitary student at night, and tells him what she has seen.

Ellesmere. What *he* has seen, please.

Sir Arthur. The Moon sees a little girl weeping over the wickedness of the world. A beautiful doll had been given her. "Oh! it was such a doll," the Moon said—a doll not made to endure the miseries of this life. Now this little maiden had two naughty, rude big brothers. They had thrown the doll high up into a tree in the garden, and had then run away.

The little maiden knew that the doll cried too. It stretched out its arms down between the green branches and looked the picture of wretchedness. "Ah," said the little maiden, "these are the sorrows of the world, of which mamma is so often talking."

That is a very sly touch of Andersen's, is it not? Our sorrows are mostly of this kind, but the doll we doat upon is a little too high up for our attainment.

Ellesmere. Now don't moralise, Sir Arthur: I want to hear the end of the story.

Sir Arthur. Meanwhile the darkness of night began to come on; and the maiden said she could never leave the dear doll to be sitting up there alone all night. "I will remain with thee," she said; but she didn't feel very happy at the thought of being alone in the dark, all night. And soon she began to see wicked little elves with their pointed caps, cowering in the bushes; and behind them, in the dark path, danced tall spectres. They all moved nearer to her, and pointed their fingers up at the doll, laughing mockingly. Oh! how frightened then was the little maiden; but she took heart, for she said to herself, "When one hasn't done anything wrong, these wicked things can't hurt one. But have I ever done anything wrong?" And then she thought for a bit. "Ah! yes! I laughed at the poor duck, with the red rag round its broken leg, which limped so funnily that it made me laugh; but it is a sin, you know, to laugh at poor creatures;" and then she looked up at the doll and said, "Hast thou ever laughed at poor animals?" And it seemed to the child as if the doll shook her head. And then the Moon was obliged to go on.

Not having the book before me to translate all of it to you, I can only give a faint notion of the prettiness of the story. But you see how it applies. There was the wicked chaffing in action, though not in speech, of the two naughty boys, and the righteous feeling of

the little maiden who knew that she had done wrong in laughing at the lame duck, for even the lower animals do not like to be laughed at, when the cause is no laughing matter for them.

Ellesmere. Yes, the story is very applicable. I wish it had ended happily. Perhaps it did; but the Moon was no doubt obliged to go on. I would have a law that all stories should be made to end happily. Why should our feelings be harrowed in fiction when they are sufficiently tormented in real life. But we have no time to lose if we are to catch that imperious train.

Thus the conversation ended.

CHAPTER XV.

REFERENCE was made, in the course of the next morning's conversation, to a possible essay with which Cranmer had threatened us respecting the mismanagement by rich men of their riches. He had not prepared any essay, but he then and there gave us his views at some length. To tell the truth, there was nothing very original in them. He spoke of the mighty power of riches, and of the many great objects to which these riches might be devoted. His list of wants was very large, and I need not enumerate them. I now pass to the conversation which ensued.

Sir Arthur. You expect them to do a great deal, forgetting how every one's time is frittered away by

the small claims upon it, which cannot be denied or ignored.

Milverton. To do any great good in the world, you want brains as well as means; purpose as well as both means and brains.

Mauleverer. Then riches bring suspiciousness with them as surely as—

Ellesmere. Overeating and drinking bring gout.

Sir Arthur. Then rich people are almost always guided, and as some would say, defended, by men of business—the kind of men who object to all schemes.

Milverton. As to saying that rich men are less benevolent than other men, that is quite absurd. Sir Arthur spoke of the small daily claims which press upon them, as these do upon all other men. But there is another, and a less obvious cause, for these rich men not devoting themselves to the great objects which Cranmer proposed for them. This cause, by the way, often applies to statesmen, as well as to rich men; and has been already indicated by Mauleverer. The first-rate thing to be done, or to be attempted to be done, is not even attempted, because the attention is taken up by a multitude of second-rate things: and so the conscience is satisfied.

Sir Arthur. I have observed, Milverton, that there is one point upon which you and I always agree; and that is, the want of forethought in mankind. We both apply our remarks to men of our own craft—to states-

men and official men; but, surely, it applies to all persons. And, as regards the matter we are considering, it is forethought that is wanted on the part of the rich, forethought in the public interest.

Now I am going to say something which Mauleverer ought to have said; for it is very detrimental to the progress of the human race. Dr. Johnson also would have said it. I infer how little men think of public affairs, from their dreams. No man has ever related to me a dream in which those public affairs entered. Their dreams, however absurd and irrelevant, are always, if I may say so, personal.

Mauleverer. You are quite right, Sir Arthur, I ought to have said this; but I am not sure that I am capable of making so subtle an observation. Milverton pretends to care a great deal about public events, and the actions of statesmen. Will he tell us that these things ever enter into his dreams?

Milverton. No; but I can detract from the subtlety of the remark, by observing, that dreams are mostly produced by physical circumstances. You are hot, or you are cold, or you hear a noise, or your little finger aches, and the dream is built upon that physical circumstance. Still I admit the subtlety of the remark, and I do fear that, rarely indeed, is a man so deeply interested by the general affairs of the world, as to make their pressure upon his mind a predominant one.

Sir Arthur. My remark about dreams was merely

a casual one, and must not carry us away from the main point of the subject, namely, the conduct of rich men as regards the use of their riches.

You must look carefully at the origin of riches in each particular case. This furnishes in my mind the real solution to the question. Riches are either hereditary (long-descended I mean); or they have been acquired in the lifetime of the man who now possesses them; or else they are possessed by the sons or near kinsfolk of the man who has suddenly made a great fortune. In the first case, there are nearly sure to be large hereditary claims, such as the keeping up of great houses or the like.

In the second case, they are seldom acquired until the man has advanced into the second stage of middle life, and he cannot undertake new adventures, with respect to which he has no experience.

In the third case, the possesser is considerably puzzled as to what to do with these riches. Naturally, one of his first objects is to rise into a higher social sphere; and this furnishes sufficient occupation for him. He is generally a liberal man, and indulges largely in those second-rate projects for the use of wealth, to which Milverton alluded. Still it is to him, if to anybody, that we must look for a consideration of the greater projects which Cranmer laid down for all rich men.

Milverton. I think that rich men are often deficient as regards small acts of graciousness; but this is from want of imagination. Now I know of one rich man—

alas, he is dead!—who was always anxious to make his houses of use to poorer people. He was a very loving man, and could not bear that anything he possessed should lie useless, and be of no good to anybody. Accordingly he would lend a house in the country for a season to some poor friend. It was a very nice and delicate act of graciousness; and it exactly exemplifies what I mean.

Ellesmere. I proposed an act of graciousness on the part of the State, which would have been a delightful use for certain moneys. I don't care much about music myself. Indeed I often wonder at the sort of passionate delight which Milverton, and people like him, have in the tinkling of cymbals; but I suppose that their professions of delight are sincere. I proposed to a grave statesman, who looked daggers at me for the proposal, that the surplus of the Irish Church revenues should be devoted to giving opera-boxes to poor people who are very fond of music. What are you all giggling at? I'll bet any money that that surplus will not be half so well employed. Dear old Peabody used to send orders for opera-boxes to poor friends. I was once present when one of these orders arrived for a poor family devoted to music; and, I declare, I have seldom seen such joy manifested by any human beings. I don't mind telling you that since that time, I have sometimes done something of the same kind myself. Very wrong, of course, for I ought to have given the money to a hospital (I

like hospitals), but I was fascinated by the recollection of the joy which Peabody's gift of an opera-box had produced in that poor family. I have a stupid love of giving pleasure which is very contemptible.

Milverton. You are certainly the most audacious man in the world, Ellesmere. How you ventured to make that impertinent remark to that arid statesman [Sir John had told us his name], I cannot imagine.

Ellesmere. The practice of audacity is much encouraged by having the honour to be one of the "Friends in Council."

Milverton. This talk about riches has put me in mind of something I should like to say to you. It relates to bequests. There should be no rational fear of mortmain in these days. There is no chance that any large part of the property of the country will be trusted to unimproving hands; but, in my official experience, I have found that the great lawyers of the present day have still a fear that property may be so misused. For my own part, I should delight in the corporation of any great town being allowed to hold a large amount of property; and I wish that rich men would leave them such amounts. There has been in my time an enormous bequest left to a particular town, and it was rendered null and void, for want of specific "directions" as to what was to be done with it. I think *that* one of the greatest pieces of injustice I have known committed entirely by lawyers.

Sir Arthur. I have a great fear, that, in this age, testators will be afraid to leave large sums of money for charitable or educational purposes, on the ground that their bequests will not be dealt with hereafter in the spirit with which they were made. Such a phrase as "The pious founder must go to the wall," is most mischievous. I fully admit that the founder, if living now, would make a different use, conformable with the spirit of the age, of his bequest. But I think that we should have a very careful regard to the original views of the founder.

Ellesmere. Indulge us, Sir Arthur, with details. I really do not know exactly what you mean.

Sir Arthur. I will explain. Suppose the founder has left money for clothing as well as education. I would not confiscate the money for clothing, and give it all to education. You may think me a stupid fellow of the olden time; but, with a view of bringing boys of talent or of genius to the fore, and thus making talent and genius useful to the State (this will please Milverton), I should aim to make my boy entirely independent of his parents, I mean in a pecuniary sense, otherwise I might not get him.

Milverton. One of the greatest surprises of my life was that, in a company of eminent men of the present day, I found that the majority of them were against Foundations or Exhibitions of any kind. It seemed to me that they ignored all history and all biography; for several of our greatest men, from Newton downwards,

might never have been heard of, if the State had not been enriched by these Foundations and Exhibitions.

A dead level is now greatly to be feared, according to which all boys will receive exactly the same education. This will make a very poor set of men.

Sir Arthur. Of course it will.

Milverton. We have all been considering the great good which sundry rich men could do with their riches. I wish to show you, on the other hand, the great mischief which, by the injudicious use of these riches, they do occasionally.

Ostentation is the great evil occasioned by riches—the prevention of simplicity of living—the raising the standard of show.

Ellesmere. There I am entirely with you; but I can never persuade you that the main evil of all this ostentation is the increase of time which it takes. That misuse and that abuse of time is the thing which I complain of. To descend into details. I do not object, at a great and sumptuous dinner, to have rare and forced vegetables presented to me. I rather agree with those people who say that this form of sumptuousness encourages a high kind of horticulture, which is really very beneficial to the general public; but what I do complain of is the length of the entertainment. Cut that short, and you will have me in concert with the entertainers.

Milverton. Oh! of course, if we could regulate the entertainments of the world, we could make them

into real pleasures, and that immortal saying of Sir George Lewis's, which I am never weary of quoting, would lose its point. Now take a ball, for instance. If one could persuade the great lady of the house to diminish her invitations by about a third; if she could make it the fashion to come early and to leave off early; if the refreshments were of a simple kind, so that they did not set the example of ostentation: surely these would be great improvements?

Ellesmere. There we see the weakness of the man who loves dancing.

Milverton. You do not perceive, my dear Ellesmere, that for a man to succeed in this life, he should have distinct and well-known foibles. This takes off the sharp edge of envy. No man is sincerely and securely loved, except by those who know his foibles.

The conversation then took a jesting turn. Sir John Ellesmere made great fun of middle-aged or elderly gentlemen who would persist in dancing. Mr. Milverton maintained that they were great benefactors to society, and that being sure not to be, what prudent mammas called "detrimentals," they helped to keep up the gaiety of the world.

And so ended our conversation upon the grand use that might be made of riches, if any rich man were wise enough to appreciate this grandeur.

CHAPTER XVI.

WE were in the library, on the succeeding day, and were ready to hear any essay or speech that any one of the "Friends" would favour us with; but nothing of the kind was forthcoming, and the conversation was of a general nature.

Ellesmere. I confess I am glad that none of my good friends are ready to impose upon us his or her particular crotchets; or, to speak more respectfully, their lucubrations, in the form of set discourse. The day after a party is the pleasantest for those who remain in the house. There are rare dishes to be tasted, which had been passed over unnoticed, on the day of the party; and what the company said and did affords an agreeable entertainment, not unspiced, sometimes, with satire. I like the odds and ends of things.

Sir Arthur. I am pleased, too, at our having nothing special to discuss, for I should like to go back to one or

two subjects which have laid hold of my mind in reference to some of our first discussions.

Do you remember that in the course of some essay, or conversation upon an essay, Milverton said something of this kind (I can't vouch for the exact words)—"He would be the greatest man of his generation who could find employment for those clever people who are now unemployed"? I began to think of the subjects I should wish investigated. This thought haunted me. Through a great part of last night I couldn't sleep for thinking what men upon what subjects I should like to have the power to employ.

Ellesmere. Oh! it's no good scheming to employ other men with what may seem to you good work. Every man will only do well what he takes to of his own accord. Why, even I, a man not given to wondrous schemes of investigation, or benevolence, could suggest five hundred things upon which the unemployed might usefully employ themselves. But they won't do it. It is only the busy and the overworked men upon whom you can throw any extra work with some chance of its being welcomed.

Sir Arthur. Bide a wee, Master Ellesmere, I shall ultimately say something with which you will be compelled to agree.

Mauleverer. I don't wish to employ men more than they are employed. If you were to make the idle men busy, they would only do mischief. Already the fussiness

and interferingness of mankind are the greatest evils in the world.

But I am ready to hear anything that Sir Arthur has to say.

Sir Arthur. Well, in few words, my thought was this—How I should like to employ certain persons to investigate the unknown, or at least unascertained, forces in the world.

Ellesmere. This is indeed, to use the slang of the day, a large order.

Sir Arthur. I am prepared for a great deal of ridicule; but I say that during the last five-and-twenty years there have been indications of the existence of certain unknown forces which it is of the highest importance to mankind to investigate.

At present the spiritualist, the juggler, and a few severe men of science, are the only persons who have given real attention to these subjects. In what I am now going to say I ought to have Ellesmere with me. I want to have these matters investigated by men who are good judges of evidence, especially by lawyers.

Milverton. I am wholly with you, but perhaps for very different reasons. First, wherever there is imposture, I am exceedingly desirous that it should be detected. And secondly, I want these matters to be investigated in order to bring before mankind more fully the laws of evidence—to show wherein ordinary

evidence fails, and what amount of what evidence is sufficient to substantiate an extraordinary statement.

Sir Arthur. I know very well that you all think me rather superstitious. You would say that I am of the same order of mind, in this respect, as my dear friend, the late Lord Lytton. But I think I could tell you some things which would rather astonish you.

Hereupon Sir Arthur related to us several most extraordinary stories having relation to his unknown forces, to which narratives Sir John Ellesmere, of course, took many clever objections, showing where, at some crucial point of the story, fraud or delusion might enter. I do not communicate these stories, because, in every case, the names of living persons, who might not approve of their experiences being recounted, were mentioned.

Milverton. I have no hesitation in telling what once occurred to me, especially as I have told it before. A number of us, men of science, men of literature, and lawyers, were resolved to have a great *séance.* It was the only one at which I ever assisted. We had laid our plans beforehand most carefully. The late Master of

Trinity, Dr. Whewell, either wrote to us, or informed us verbally, that there was immense difficulty in making a skilful person blindfold who did not choose to be blindfolded. Such a person could contrive to keep the bandage a little removed from his eyes, and so the darkness would not be complete.

The celebrated Alexis was the unfortunate being upon whom we had to experiment. We placed large masses of cotton wool over the face, leaving only breathing spaces, and we tied up the head with numerous bandages, so that it appeared like a huge pudding.

Then the *séance* commenced. Various wonderful things were done, but to my sceptical mind it appeared to me possible, though of course I could not see how, that all these things could have been done by some subtle mode of communication between Alexis and the man who came with him, and who had to put him into the mesmeric trance. It is true that this man remained apparently quite impassive.

You may see how carefully our preparations were made, when I tell you that two of our company were told off to watch that man, and never to take their eyes off him. Afterwards, they were unable to tell us that they had discovered anything.

Then the *séance* degenerated, as I thought, into a most absurd proceeding. Alexis was to describe the houses of some of the persons present. Well, one house is very like another, and I thought all this part of the

séance very shallow and trivial. I went away into another room, communicating, by folding doors, thrown open, with the great room where Alexis and his friend were surrounded by the inquirers. Another man followed me. This is, of course, the weak point in my story, the one on which Ellesmere will comment. I may, however, add that this other man was a dear and intimate friend of mine, in whose good faith towards me I have a belief that cannot be shaken. He, like myself, had come away because he thought that what the rest were doing could lead to nothing definite.

The house, if I recollect rightly, was Lord Melbourne's, in South Street; and the distance was at least eighty or ninety feet that separated us two from the group that closely surrounded Alexis. Either my friend or I proposed that we should write something, fold it up, enclose it in an envelope, and present it to Alexis to be read. The words that we did write were not uttered. I folded up the sheet of notepaper, put it in an envelope, and went back to my friends in the other room. Rather rudely, for I was a very young man, and there were grave and reverend seniors present, I broke through the circle, had the audacity to say that I thought their present proceedings were rather vague and could lead to nothing certain, and that I wished to see whether Alexis could read what was within this envelope. Alexis put it to his chin, and in about thirty-five seconds (for I particularly noticed the time) read out the words, which

consisted of the names of a celebrated Byzantine emperor. Now, Ellesmere, for I see you are most anxious to interrupt me, don't suppose that I make this statement with a view to prove to your mind that Alexis had any of what, for want of a better term, are loosely called supernatural powers. I adduce it to illustrate three things.

First, to show what should be done to ensure convincing experiments. You will believe me when I tell you that I was not a co-conspirator with Alexis, but you cannot have the same assurance as regards the other man. You have only my belief in his honesty.

Secondly, there is nothing to show—I have no proof to adduce—that the companion of Alexis somehow or other did not contrive to make himself master of what we had done.

Thirdly, there remains the great question of whether Alexis had or had not some power, not by any means a supernatural power, of seeing further into things than we can see.

I entirely agree with Sir Arthur that these questions deserve investigation. By judicious investigation we may discover fraud or delusion, or we may obtain more accurate views of the just laws of evidence; or we may ascertain the existence and the limits of some force or power that we know nothing of.

Ellesmere. You have anticipated me. That is a regular practice of yours, which you have pursued right

through life, to declare what could be said against you. That is why you bring us "Friends in Council" together, and make puppets of us.

Sir Arthur. Now I come in with my first remarks as regards the people who should be employed to look after these things. You remember L. and H.?

He named living persons.

I always have thought they were the most remarkable men of our time at Cambridge. L. was even then the best judge of evidence I have ever known. He would give you the substance of a great debate in the House of Commons. He would show you how far this speaker went; where he was partially answered by a man on the other side; and, eventually, what was the real upshot of the debate. When you read that debate, you saw what a wonderful judge of evidence our friend L. was.

Now for H. He was a high Wrangler. He was the best explainer of natural phenomena that I ever listened to, and was also a wonderful judge of evidence. He sat for some time as a judge. But both these men are men of fortune. They retired into private life, and their extraordinary abilities are lost to the world.

These are the kind of fellows I wish to employ in investigating my unknown forces.

Milverton. Now I will tell you something which I had never intended to tell to any human being. There

are two subjects which have been the torments of my life—the war of men with men, and the cruelty of men to animals. With regard to the latter I think we shall do something, even in our own generation.

With regard to the former, I am almost hopeless in respect to all ordinary motives and conclusions. It is in vain that you show the vast folly of war. Oddly enough a Frenchman, M. Bastiat, has beaten all of us in showing the vastness of this folly. It is really no good arguing. The armies of Europe go on increasing and increasing; and each State, with some show of reason, says: "If I am to be kept intact, if my commerce is to be insured, if my people are to be protected from the horrors of invasion—I must endeavour to maintain fleets and armies which will keep my dear good neighbours in sufficient fear of me." And what are you to say to this self-preservation argument?

Ellesmere. Nothing that I can see.

Milverton. Well, then, Ellesmere may laugh at me. You others may partially sympathise with me; but you may think that what I am going to say is what the Germans describe in that untranslatable word, *Schwärmerei.* But my only hope rests in great discoveries and inventions which would reveal things that are now hidden from us.

You may set me down as a dreamer and an enthusiast, but I believe in a Beneficent Creator, and I believe in the continued progress of mankind towards a much higher

civilization than we have hitherto acquired. But I believe that this progress depends to a certain extent upon future discoveries of great laws of nature. Not upon discovering that iron is a better material than wood for resistance, or upon each nation making a bigger gun than has been made by its neighbour nation. Mankind, I hope, will yet discover some physical fact—something which we now call supernatural—which may at once lead them to perceive the enormous folly and wickedness of settling nice questions of policy by nothing more pertinent to the subject than brute force. It is to science, rightly directed, that I look for the gradual discontinuance of war. Otherwise I should despair of the human race. This is why I heartily agree with Sir Arthur in thinking that if we could employ our best men in investigating the most mysterious branches of human knowledge, which are brought before us by those whom you are pleased to call quacks and impostors, we should not be losing human time or effort.

Ellesmere. These questions are beyond me. My wings are not strong enough to partake the airy flights of imagination with which our poetical friends, Sir Arthur and Milverton, soar above. Don't think me a brute or a savage. I really sympathise with you, though you hardly believe it. I think that half the questions which produce war might far better be settled by diplomatists aided by lawyers; and though I could have said something anent the Alabama negotiations which might have been un-

pleasant to both sides, I still thought it a great advance in civilization that the vexed question should have been decided in any other way than by reference to the armed superiority of either nation.

Milverton. The only antagonist I feared, having in reality gone so far in agreement with us, Sir Arthur, I vote that we "break up the *séance*," for if we were to provoke any further discussion, I am by no means sure that we should leave "Our Friends in Council" in so much apparent harmony with us.

Ellesmere. No; do not break up the *séance*, but let us change the subject, or at least vary it.

Talking of the marvellous, or, as I may say, of the impossible, there was something which was said long ago in one of our conversations which has often recurred to me. It was a wild vagary either of Milverton's or Sir Arthur's. Solid, sensible men, such as Cranmer and myself, would never have condescended to have imagined it; and as for Mauleverer, he does not waste his time in imagining any alleviation for the woes and troubles of mankind.

Sir Arthur. This is a pompous but not unpleasant exordium. Milverton and I must be gratified at any vagary of ours recurring to the mind of a solid, sensible man.

Ellesmere. It was, that the greatest alleviation for mankind would be for a man to have two bodies, and to be able to change his soul from one into the other.

I believe that fatigue, simple fatigue, is the cause of our greatest errors. You often wonder how a man of great eminence, or a body of such men, should have said or done something, or committed themselves to some course of action, which the most commonplace man at once discerns to be injudicious, and far beneath the intelligence of the person or persons concerned. The truth is that the commonplace man is looking at the matter, free from the fatigue which numbed the minds of him or them whom he is blaming.

Milverton. This is a wonderful bit of toleration to come from that quarter.

Ellesmere. But I used to think of the vagary chiefly in reference to myself. Mind, it must be the pure, simple, naked soul, if I may so express myself, which must be able to change its habitation at will. All those wonderful things called nerves must belong equally to both bodies. The horses must be quite different; it is only the coachman who is to remain the same.

Now, we are often talking of the pleasures of the world, and criticising them severely. Nine-tenths of our criticism is merely a result of fatigue. We do not enjoy these things, and we wish them (at any rate I do) to be bisected, simply because we come to them with muscles and nerves fatigued in other ways.

Again; why is it that bores and noodles often have their way at boards, committees, and public assemblies of all kinds? Only because the sensible men are

fatigued; and it is one of the miseries of human life that bores are always very strong and in excellent health. My father, who was a staunch Conservative, very different in that respect from myself, used to say that the Radicals would always prevail at any committee or public meeting, because they kept less regular hours than good Conservatives, and that the latter would always go away in time for dinner. What he said about Radicals would far more aptly apply to bores and troublesome people generally. They don't care about their dinners: to air their crotchets or their follies is wholesome meat and drink to them. But if one could enter a new body when one liked, one should be a match for these fellows.

Milverton. If Sir Arthur or I put forth this vagary, it must have been upon much more serious grounds—to enable men to bear their sorrows better, and, altogether, to fight the battle of life with more purpose and consistency.

Ellesmere. I think that though the bodies would start with perfect equality of nature, they would soon, from different uses, become very different. This would be a great advantage. My second body would become more accustomed to the labour of pleasure, and I should always take it out in the evening—but there would be another and a far greater advantage. I have studied getting on in the world much more than any of the rest of you. My more natural self, my first self, is modest,

somewhat shamefaced, very much averse to pressing what are called its claims, otherwise I should have been Lord Chancellor long ago. I should aim at making the nerves of my second body much less sensitive than those of my first body; and I should throw all the coarse work of self-assertion upon this second body. Yes; I see a great amelioration for mankind in this judicious scheme of Milverton's or Sir Arthur's.

In these conversations, for instance, I should use my two bodies, but should more often bring the weaker one into play—I mean the more delicately-nerved one—in order to accommodate myself to the present company.

Cranmer. Perhaps there may be such an arrangement as this in some other system of worlds.

Mauleverer. Now, Cranmer, do not imagine such a foolish creature as man careering about in any other part of the universe. It is quite enough to have him here, and to see what folly a creature so constituted will commit.

Ellesmere. I do not think it necessary that women should have two bodies. In the first place, they are never tired of pleasure; and in the next, what a fearful amount of coquetry and inconstancy this duplex body would allow them to commit. Moreover, you must allow, Lady Ellesmere, that women are much less boreable than men—a very curious phenomenon, but an undoubted one.

Lady Ellesmere. With all respect to Mr. Milverton

and Sir Arthur, I think speculations of this kind savour somewhat of irreverence. We are to be contented with what we are, and are to make the best of that; and so I propose, as Leonard said, that we should break up our *séance.*

Lady Ellesmere's proposition was adopted.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER luncheon, on the same day, we re-assembled in the library, and the autobiography of the late Mr. John Mill was the subject talked of, and it was much disputed over. That passage came in question where he says something of this kind, that, in the present state of society, the best men should keep away from it altogether. Mr. Milverton maintained that it was a horrid doctrine, and he believed that John Mill did not really say what was attributed to him. He (Mr. Milverton) should like to see the context. We had not the book there, so this could not be shown to him. Then Sir John said as follows:—

Ellesmere. But I thought, Milverton, that you were one of those who especially objected to the present

state of society—that you had fifty faults to find with it.

Milverton. That is a very different thing from saying that the best and cleverest men should abstain from society. That would be like the best men abstaining from political life, which would be ruinous to almost any country. Let us all endeavour to improve society, not to abstain from it, like a pack of stupid hermits.

Ellesmere. Friends like ourselves, who live much together, must, if they are sincere men, often repeat themselves. I therefore, being a sincere man, have no shame in saying to you what I have said at least twenty times before, that I have a panacea for almost all the evils which beset our social gatherings. I put it in mathematical language. Bisect all entertainments, public and private, and you have done the thing.

Sir Arthur. No, you have not. The extent of the crowding is as great an evil as the length of the time.

Ellesmere. My good friend, do you suppose I meant my bisection to apply only to time?

Sir Arthur. Still I have you. Your bisection cannot apply to the time at which the entertainments shall begin.

Cranmer. Yes: there he has you, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Cranmer is always mightily delighted when I make any blunder—not that this is a blunder. There are corollaries to all axioms, even to those in

Euclid, if I recollect rightly; and, of course, I meant to put in one or two of these corollaries.

Sir Arthur. I have often thought that I should like to have much influence with one of the foremost leaders of fashion, some great lady.

Mauleverer. Fashion is a contemptible thing.

Milverton. No, it is not—to use the contradictory language which prevails among us at present. Fashion tends to counteract the influence of wealth, which at present is inordinate.

Lady Ellesmere. But let us hear what Sir Arthur would do if he were the whispering guardian angel—

Ellesmere. —or demon,

Lady Ellesmere. —to some great lady who is potent in society. I am but a small lady, but should like to know what he wishes to say to any of us ladies.

Sir Arthur. For a whole year I should wish to guide her absolutely as regards the entertainments she had to give. Take a ball, for instance. This is really the best entertainment in the world, or would be, if it were managed properly.

Ellesmere. There Milverton would agree with you; for doubtless he perceives all kinds of harmony, all upper spheres of thought and feeling, all discords which are only veiled concords, in watching dancing boys and girls, as well as in listening to Beethoven's symphonies.

Milverton. No, he is not quite so absurd, but he

sees a certain poetry and beauty in good dancing as well as in Beethoven's symphonies.

Lady Ellesmere. You will not let this whispering guardian angel to some great lady, instruct us as to his whispers when she is about to give a ball.

Sir Arthur. I would first make her carefully measure her rooms. I would aid her in doing that, and would show her what space should be allowed for those who have to sit down—

Ellesmere. How the polite Sir Arthur avoids the disagreeable word "wallflowers."

Sir Arthur. —and for those who have to dance. I would instil into her mind the simple axiom that when you ask people to dance, you should give them room to dance.

Ellesmere. My bisection—only in other words.

Sir Arthur. I would insist upon her ball beginning early and ending early, and would order her to make a fuss about punctuality. The hours should be from eight o'clock to one. Those who really care about dancing are the sort of people who are not devoted to grand and late dinners.

Lady Ellesmere. This is all very fine, Sir Arthur, but even the greatest people are somewhat ruled by expense.

Sir Arthur. I am quite prepared for that objection. I would diminish in every respect the sumptuousness of the affair. I rarely assist at such entertainments; but when I do, I always see that half, at least, of this

sumptuousness is entirely needless. You do not want the rarest flowers (they are generally in the way); you do not want prematurely forced fruit. All this extravagance is pure waste for such an occasion, and only tends to produce extravagant expenditure in those who can ill afford it. Then I should say, give great attention —as Ellesmere said in his essay on hospitality—to the modes of adit and exit. Show your power of organization there, I would say. Make it an easy thing, if you can, to come to you and to get away from you. In every respect my aim would be directed to gain easiness and simplicity.

Mrs. Milverton. Do you know, Sir Arthur, how it is that the hours for all entertainments have become so late?

Milverton. I have always thought that it depended upon the hour at which the general post goes out. That being late, has made everything else late.

Mrs. Milverton. That is a man's reason—an official man's; but I think that mine is much nearer the truth. Everybody is afraid of being the first at a party. You name eight o'clock. The majority of your guests keep away till nearly half-past eight. You then name half-past eight: they keep away till nearly nine, and so it goes on.

Ellesmere. Upon my word, Mrs. Milverton, that is a very subtle reason, though it will not wholly explain the phenomenon. I wish I were not so shy; it has

been a great misery to me. There you are, laughing as usual, whenever I say anything serious.

Milverton. One of the greatest evils of social life in the present day is that the men who are not quite so young, who are busy men, who are over-worked men, can enter so little into society without great loss of time and health. That is what I think John Mill must have meant when he uttered that strange and severe dictum of his, or what you try to persuade me was his dictum.

I pity the hard-working man of business—say the father of a family—considering the little pleasure he now derives from society. He naturally fears it. Its late hours, its crowded and over-gas-lit rooms, its paucity of entertainment for him, form a great drawback upon social life. The tendency of that life is to knock the brains out of society.

Mauleverer. Very good, Milverton; that is a real evil. I have not sympathized a bit with all that dancing sylph Sir Arthur (query though—are sylphs ever masculine?) has told us he should whisper to his great lady about balls; but nine-tenths of what he has said applies to dinners; and what you have said anent the terrors which prevent the best kind of men from entering into society as much as they would otherwise do, seems to me sound doctrine.

Milverton. I would not have you think, however, that my thoughts about this matter are given only to your late and fashionable people. To tell the truth, I

was hardly thinking of them. I was going very low down in society. I was not thinking of what should clear "the cloudy foreheads of the great," as Dryden translating and even enriching Horace, says, but of what should soothe and amuse that numerous class of hard-working people who carry on the main part of the business transacted in that large place over there to the north-east. I have often thought what a peculiar melancholy is to be read in their faces as you pass them in the street. It is not "a delicate or a fantastic melancholy." It is the melancholy which belongs to an ardent and eager form of civilization; and which, in these modern times, is the prevailing melancholy of the world. It is not the scholar's melancholy, nor the courtier's, nor the soldier's, nor the lawyer's, nor the lover's, each of which is so well described by Jaques; neither is it his own—a melancholy "compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects;" but it partakes more of the dreary, down-hearted, care-oppressed lassitude of the man of business. It is especially for the sake of such men that I would brighten up society and also make it more easy for them to partake.

Ellesmere. Yes, they would undoubtedly like to be male wallflowers.

Lady Ellesmere. I declare, John, you are a sort of Mephistopheles, liking to detract from and lower every good sentiment.

Milverton. I don't care, my dear; I accept his saying. Yes: I should like them to be more able, with less inconvenience and with less loss of time and health, to accompany their wives and children. Call them what you like, I have no doubt they would have great pleasure in so doing.

Ellesmere. My bisection becomes at this moment very necessary. If any of you say any more, the present entertainment of discourse, which has hitherto, no doubt, been very delightful, will exceed the right limits, and the other half, which Sir Arthur and Milverton would not spare us, if they had their way, would spoil all. Therefore, let us take a walk to get an appetite for luncheon.

As usual, Sir John had his way, and we all left the library. I see that impatient men always do get their way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER dinner yesterday, Mr. Milverton thought it would be a good opportunity to see whether he could persuade his friends to resume the hearing of his subject. He introduced the topic in the following manner :—

Milverton. Have I not been very good to you? You promised me originally that you would hear and discuss the subject I had prepared for you this Easter. I have allowed you, without let or hindrance, to introduce all the speeches and the letters and the essays that you proposed to make in that walk of yours to Surbiton when I was not present. Now comes my turn. I do want you to hear and to criticize carefully the remainder of what Ellesmere calls my lucubrations. And I seize upon the favourable after-dinner moment, when most men are most ready to promise that they will give liberally, or that they will endure nobly.

Sir Arthur. I am sure that we shall gladly hear to-morrow morning what you have to say.

When the next morning came, Mr. Milverton read the following essay:—

It may be that in every planet there is some one spot which, from the configuration of the land and water of that planet, seems destined to be, if not a central place of happiness and joy, at any rate the centre for traffic, for commerce, and for civilization.

Certainly there is such a central spot in the planet with which we are most concerned. And it has not belied its destiny. The ships of all nations find there a secure haven and a fitting place for the barter of the rich merchandize they carry. The stranger there, alone, finds himself scarcely a stranger, since all the various peoples of this planet furnish denizens of the great city which has grown up at this centre of the planet. And this city is in itself a nation.

Pre-eminent among the buildings, more or less stately, of this nation of a city, rise two buildings which aptly represent the two great objects to which all the peoples of all planets may be supposed chiefly to direct their attention. The one building is a great temple; the other is the central government building, in which laws are made for the government not only of the nation-city, but of the various countries and kingdoms which are united with it, or have been colonized by it.

Here, if anywhere, must be seen examples of the wisdom which, in such a central spot of the planet, may be expected to have reached its full development. For even in the wisest government, when it has to preside over very distant localities, the emanating force which will keep all things right at the centre, may not unnaturally be expected to have lost some of its energy before it reaches those distant regions.

Here, at the centre, all must be well

ordered, and the power which has produced and sustained this mighty city must, we should think, have been greatest at its centre.

But, strange to say, it is not so. All the difficulties of life—all those difficulties which render life sordid and uncomely—are to be seen in close proximity to this great central building, which presents the strange mockery that the great lords and wise men who assemble together in it seem to be powerless in those matters which are within their nearest grasp. So true is this, that most of my hearers will at once recognize that the nation-city is London, and that the central Government building is the abode of its Parliament.

Without discussing in detail the many evils and oversights, sanitary and otherwise, which this great building looks closely down upon, we may take as a remarkable example of what has been stated above, the prevalence of smoke in the vicinity of this building—a building, by the way,

singularly liable to be injured by smoke. On any day when the wind is from the south, you may see vast volumes of smoke making their way to that easily defaceable building. You can hardly imagine that there is a single legislator who is ignorant of this fact. It does not, however, excite them to clamour for any abatement of this nuisance. How can you expect that they will care to abate it for distant regions?

Now the solution of this carelessness is a very easy and very natural one. It consists of two heads. In the first place, what is the business of everybody comes to be the business of nobody.

But, in the second place, there is a far more prevailing cause for this neglect. That building is not a home. And this cause of neglect is one which operates very largely throughout this country. In these locomotive days, the upper and governing classes have less and less of home-feeling —an evil which leads directly to many

errors and oversights in building, and to a general indifference as to the welfare of any particular locality.

If our stay-at-home ancestors had possessed the scientific knowledge which we have, as regards all sanitary matters, they would have taken far more pains than we do to guard against all the unsanitary mischiefs which rendered their permanent abodes so liable to danger and discomfort. The effect of this deficiency of home-feeling is peculiarly great and perceptible in those large cities to which the governing classes have recourse for a certain period only of the year. The metropolis of every country labours under great disadvantage on this account.

Another comparatively slight matter, which yet must daily be brought before the eyes of our legislators, is the difficulty and danger of pedestrian movement towards this great centre of concourse—the Houses of Parliament. In their vicinity, almost better than anywhere else, that plan might

be adopted, which, by means of over-spanning with light bridges the difficult juncture of cross streets, would render pedestrian movement for the sickly, the aged, and the timid, tolerably comfortable, and certainly assured. Perhaps, after all, "subways" would be better; but there is this against them, that strangers to the town, and even inhabitants, would not always be aware of their existence.

Well, then there is another point, relating not to comfort or to sanitary well-being, but which, nevertheless, as it concerns beauty, might be supposed to have struck the mind of every one of those potent persons who are our legislators. From the adjacent bridge a view may be seen which, even with all its disadvantages, is one of the most striking in any European city. But it is deformed and disfigured by one or two buildings of oppressive and revolting hideousness. Those are buildings which have in some way or other come under parliamentary control. It would not have

been too great a demand for these legislators to have made—that the plans of these buildings should have been submitted for its approval. In the best times of Italian architecture, it was considered that the erection of a public building or a statue, or the construction of a fountain, was a thing which concerned the community; and, in the case of statues and fountains, models of them were erected in the precise spots which those works of art were to occupy. It might be too much to expect that this should be done now; but, at any rate, it would not be too much to ask, that models of all buildings which could not be erected without parliamentary suffrance, should be submitted for parliamentary inspection. We may have no great faith in the artistic skill of our legislators; but I, for one, cannot believe that a committee of English gentlemen would have approved the designs for some of those buildings which now disfigure the grand view to be seen from that bridge.

The desire for fitness and beauty in architecture is perhaps much more common among even the rudest of the population than is generally imagined; and the pleasure which a beautiful and proportionate building may give to millions of people, even though they see it but for a few moments, as they hurry to and fro, is a pleasure not to be despised; and, moreover, it is a great, though silent, means of education. The greatest critics (such, for instance, as Lessing) have laid down the rule that, if possible, nothing in art that is disproportionate, misformed, or badly coloured, should be brought before the eyes of the young. They even object to caricature on this ground. To adopt such a proposition in all its bearings may be unpractical, may be almost impossible. But certainly the converse holds good; namely, that to bring before the eyes of the young and the uneducated beautiful and well-proportioned objects of art is a means of education, the indirect effects

of which it is difficult to over-estimate.

There is certainly a wonderful stupidity in mankind as regards the neglect which they show of those things which ought to have most interest for them. Any one who fully appreciates this stupidity, does not need the evidence of natural philosophers to convince him that man has been much longer on the earth than the chronology, generally received, will admit. Considering the inattention he has always shown to the matters of nearest interest to him, he must have been many, many thousands of years a denizen of this planet to have arrived even at the partial civilization which he prides himself upon having attained.

That profound writer, Bishop Butler, draws an argument for the immortality of man from his comparative inattention to mundane things. The early study of astronomy is an instance which the good Bishop adduces to prove his case. We

might agree with him so far; and be content that there should be some astronomers, even if they stumble occasionally over pails while looking at the stars, if only as furnishing a potent argument for so great a theme as the immortality of man. But what I think we must grudge, is the enormous amount of labour, thought, and invention which men have given, in all times, to matters which; though they may claim to affect society in some degree, are still of small moment when put side by side with the matters that are neglected.

It is always well to descend from the abstract to the concrete, in discussing human affairs: I will, therefore, give an example to illustrate exactly what I mean.

Take the ballot, for instance. What pamphlets, what books, what leading articles, have been written upon this slight question of detail! What an immense quantity of thought and time has been given to it! How many nights of earnest debate have been devoured by it in the

most intelligent and freest assembly in the world!

Compare all this labour, all this thought, all this time, with the labour, thought, and time that have been bestowed upon any sanitary measure, however deeply that measure has concerned the real welfare of mankind. Observe how the smallest political abuse awakes the deepest interest, while the gravest social abuses are allowed to grow up and flourish unchecked, and almost unheeded.

I am not, for a moment, contending that there should be stagnation in politics. It would be a very dull world if this were the case; but I do contend that, at least, hand-in-hand with these political conflicts, of which I allow the full interest, the full importance, and the exceeding amusement (for mankind does enjoy battle of all kinds, whether in words or with arms), I say hand-in-hand with these conflicts should go a careful consideration of those perhaps more sombre, but certainly more nearly

pressing, social improvements which concern the daily life of man.

Now it is no good pointing out these essential errors in the conduct of ourselves and our fellow-men, without endeavouring to provide, or, at least, to propose, something in the shape of a partial remedy.

Before beginning to do so, one notable observation must be made, and it is a very commonplace one. It is rare indeed that the same man has an equal aptitude for furthering political and social improvement. There is one class of minds to whom political objects are very dear, and political strife a very grand and welcome occupation. They firmly believe that if the political machine were put into perfect order, all would go right. Such things as sanitary laws seem to them trivialities. "Make men free, and all will go well."

There is another class of minds who are inclined, perhaps unduly, to undervalue the greatest political objects. They say, "Make

men clean, make men comfortable, make men sober, provide for the good government of great towns, and all will then go well, for you will have wise and good citizens."

Of course, neither of these extremes contains the whole truth. But, up to the present moment, the former extreme has been predominant, and has had its own way almost unchecked.

Now could not some plan be devised by which these two sets of aspirations, these two industries, should both have a fair field for working? I venture to think that such arrangements of public business could be made, as would not only allow, but would favour, the just working of these two classes of intelligence for the public good.

One of the greatest evils of our present system of administration is its want of permanence. The most careless observer must have noticed this sad and prevailing defect.

A minister is placed at the head of a department, generally an able man; for,

after all, these political struggles do, as a general rule, bring superior men to the surface. If we may judge from experience, it nearly always requires a year before the new man, however industrious and intelligent he may be, can fully master the business of his department. He then, if political affairs are somewhat tranquil, and the government is a strong one, may have a year or two to make good use of the knowledge he has gained. But soon, alas! there comes some great or some small political convulsion or difficulty. He is either ousted from power altogether, or he is removed to some other department, of which he has to master all the details, and to be again, for a time, in the hands of his subordinates; to whom, if he is a wise and not a vain man, he will, for that time, judiciously submit himself.

I think I have shown clearly the want of permanent effort which proves so fatal to good administration, and especially fatal to the production of new and well-considered legislation. It is a terrible temptation to a

man who knows that, according to all political experience, his tenure of power will be short, to do something which should be essentially his own, so that he might, as it were, leave his mark in public affairs.

The statesman has not the same advantage as the skilful rider in the circus. This rider can refuse the hoop when it is offered to him; can refuse it again and again, if his own nerves are not prepared and the pace of his horse not exactly suitable for the dexterous leap. He knows that he can go round and round the ring as often as he likes, and that he will eventually perform some feat (perhaps leap successively through three hoops) which will charm all the beholders. But the statesman knows that his career is very limited; that he has not the command of his arena; and that he must leap through his hoop whenever it is offered to him.

That feeling is the cause of many weak and inefficient measures of legislation.

Another great evil is the disruption, or, at least, the dissonance, between those who

are solely engaged in legislation and those who are solely engaged in administration: to put it briefly—between active and intelligent Members of Parliament and active and intelligent members of the permanent Civil Service.

It must not be thought egotistical on my part, if I refer occasionally to my own experience of the Civil Service of this country, to which I have been for so many years attached. Well, then, I say that it has often come within my experience, that a measure really prepared with considerable care by members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords, has proved inefficient, sometimes absolutely unworkable, by reason of some errors, or omissions, which the permanent officers of the department to which the measure applied, would, at once, if they had been consulted during the progress of the measure, have prevented or remedied. I remember one particular instance of this huge defect which may serve as a striking example. An admirable measure—admirable

in its purpose—was proposed and carried through both Houses triumphantly. No word had been said to the department which would have to administer this measure.

They had not in any way been consulted. And here it must be borne in remembrance that the permanent heads of departments are generally very busy men. They are unable to follow the course of legislation, and for them the work of the day is mostly all-absorbing.

To return to this measure. On its being handed over to the department which had to work it, it was discerned at once that it conflicted fatally with previous legislation of a superior order.

The persons who were to be benefited by this excellent measure immediately applied to the department to have its provisions carried into effect. The law officers of the day were consulted, and they pronounced, as the department had foreseen, that no steps could be taken under this act, and that it was a dead letter.

I come now to my proposal of a remedy for these anomalies. It is, that as soon as may be after the assembling of a new parliament, permanent committees should be formed for the carrying into effect those measures of social reform which are much needed, and which have attracted a sufficient share of public attention (for that is requisite) to be likely to meet with general acceptation. The chairman of any such committee should be either the minister or the under-secretary of that department to which the measure, when completed, is likely to be submitted for administration.

The novelty, however, which I would propose is, that one or more of the officers of that department should be added to that committee.

Objection may decidedly be taken to official persons being associated with members of a parliamentary committee upon exactly equal terms. But I think that there is a way of meeting this objection.

It has always appeared to me that the

civilized world has not made sufficient use of those functionaries called assessors.

The assessor holds a very peculiar position of independence. He is very differently situated from a witness. The attitude of a witness has, for the most part, something of hostility in it. However honest and well-meaning he may be, he is always in fear of a surprise. Sometimes he is made to say too little, sometimes too much; and it may be laid down as a general rule that he quits the witness-box very dissatisfied with himself. Often he is the more dissatisfied, the more anxious he has been to convey the exact truth to his examiners.

Again, the position of the assessor is in very striking contrast to the committee, or other general body, whom he has been called upon to assist. He is not pledged by any of their former proceedings, whether those proceedings have been taken by the general body, or by individual members of it. He has come for that occasion, and for that occasion only. This position of his

is still stronger, when attending a committee which has been formed almost upon the hypothesis that every member of it has already a distinct opinion upon the question at issue.

The expression *amicus curiæ* is a very happy one: he is to be a friend and not a partizan.

At the same time his position differs very materially from the ordinary giver of advice. The assessor is not free from a very distinct and very definite responsibility. The perfectly free adviser is rather apt to become a wild, vague, and dangerous individual. Perhaps more foolish things have been said by man in the capacity of adviser than in fulfilling any other function. The bold man has told the timid man to be sure and be courageous; the cautious man has insisted upon the necessity of a long course of cautiousness from one whose native rashness can never be quelled for ten minutes together. And, in fact, no form of absurdity known to mankind, has failed to be prac-

tised by those who have assumed the position of judicious givers of advice. Now, our assessor has all along the weight of a certain responsibility impressed upon him; and yet the responsibility is of a very different kind from that of the general body whom he has been called upon to assist.

The conclusion from the foregoing remarks is, that those official persons whose services, as I have before shown, would be so useful to parliamentary committees, might render those services as assessors, even if it were thought advisable that no voting powers should be awarded to them.

The foregoing proposal would require that the public offices should be made richer than they are at present in persons of some gift for statesmanship—who should, according to the excellent phrase of that accomplished official man, Sir Henry Taylor, be "in-doors statesmen."

Every office of magnitude should have one or two of these men connected with it; men who, conversant with all the details of the

office, and with all the previous legislation affecting it, should yet be free enough from the daily administration of those details, to be occasionally spared for some months to consider the future legislation which would render the department most beneficial for the public service.

It seems to me that it would be only pedantry to object to such an arrangement on the ground of its being unconstitutional; and that it would bring into harmony two things which are often terribly discordant, namely, legislation and administration.

Sir Arthur. It is from no impatience on my part, Milverton—from none of that wild desire for bisection which possesses Ellesmere—that I propose that we should not discuss this essay now. I want to have what my young friend, whom I have told you of before, calls "a good solid think," before I attempt to criticise the many grave points which you have brought before us.

Ellesmere. Painful as it is to me to accede to any proposition for leaving off, I consent to do so, and for the same reason as Sir Arthur has adduced. Subsequently to that charming invention of modern

days, the pre-prandial tea, we shall all be in a fitting state of mind amply to discuss these nice questions of legislation and of administration which Milverton has brought before us.

This was agreed to, and we went about our respective work until we met again for the pre-prandial tea.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER tea-time of the same day the conversation upon the essay commenced.

Ellesmere. I begin with the beginning of your essay. It was what you scribes think to be a fine piece of writing—so fine that, for some time, I did not perceive what was your drift. And when I did perceive it, I did not think that you told us much that we did not know before. I could have summed it all up in a very homely proverb—namely, that "The shoemaker's wife is always the worst shod," for we cannot expect that people will attend to those things which are nearest for them to observe and to do. Besides, we all knew before that Parliament was not always very wise. If it were so, how unfair a representative it would be of the people! But then, how little time it possesses for wisdom; and the exercise of wisdom certainly requires time.

What you men, who have not been in the House

of Commons, never make enough allowance for, is the little time at its disposal. You will talk as if the House consisted of a small committee of sensible men, instead of a large body of 652. To my thinking, the House of Commons, taken as a whole, is a wonderful production—wonderful as regards the common-sense which can be elicited from it on all serious occasions.

Sir Arthur. It has always appeared to me that ministers, and official personages generally, do not trust the House of Commons enough. Now, in matters of expense, the House of Commons is really a most reasonable body to deal with, only you must explain things to them, you must be very frank with them. You need not even fear putting a high or generous motive before them.

Milverton. Very true. But, note this; you members of the House of Commons say that we official men have not faith enough in you. Speaking, for the moment, on behalf of official men generally—from ministers downwards, I say that we have sufficient faith in you as a body; but that we fear the crotchets and the perversity of individual members. And we fear these things on account of the time which it takes to answer the said crotchets and the said perversity. I have known a minister give up a really good case, which he ought to have supported, solely because he saw that a night would be lost in supporting it; and, on the highest public grounds, he could not afford to lose that night.

Ellesmere. All the mischief arises from a superfluity of human talk. And here I must say something to you which was in my mind during the whole time that Milverton's ornate exordium was being uttered. One can foresee that Milverton will, during this Easter vacation, vex us much about sundry improvements that might be made in the mode of living of those whom we call the lower classes.

Now I am going to put before you one felicity of theirs, which almost compensates them for all other evils. They do not have to listen to long talk.

Cranmer. But they talk a great deal about the same subject.

Ellesmere. Yes; but their words are brief. Now, in our own class, in almost every sentence that a man utters, you know how it will conclude. But he *will* put it grammatically; and he does not spare you from listening to a single unnecessary—"I have no hesitation in avowing" [here Milverton laughed].

Milverton. I must explain, Sir Arthur. Ellesmere is alluding to an old joke of ours at college. We invented, I believe, a sentence for the late Sir Robert Peel. I cannot believe that he ever uttered anything like it. But it ran thus—"I have no hesitation in avowing, whatever embarrassment it may hereafter entail upon her Majesty's government, that his present Majesty, the King of the French, has talents and abilities of a far higher order than those of any sovereign who has

sat upon that throne since the days of the Emperor Napoleon." This was a way of saying that Louis Philippe was a cleverer man than Louis the Sixteenth or Charles the Tenth, and shows what the young men of the universities thought of parliamentary speech-making. When you members of the House of Commons talk about the want of time, you must, if you please, recollect how much time you waste in unnecessary *verbiage*.

Cranmer. I will take up another point in the essay. Are you, or were you, Milverton, against the ballot?

Milverton. Neither for nor against it. You do not understand what I have been saying, if you do not see that I merely took the ballot as furnishing an instance of the immense time and thought given to a political question, not of the highest order, in contrast to the time and thought given to any social question of the highest order. If you refer to the last report of the medical officer of the Privy Council, you will find that thousands of persons die annually of preventable diseases.* Now that constitutes a question of the highest order.

* "It is the common conviction of persons who have most studied the subject, that the deaths which occur in this country (now about half-a-million a year) are by fully a third part more numerous than they would be, if existing knowledge of the chief causes of disease were reasonably well applied throughout the country; and I need hardly add that, if thus some 125,000 cases of preventable suffering annually attain their final record in the death-register, that vast

Sir Arthur. The great object for a statesman, and, indeed, for all men of statesmenlike minds, is to discern what public questions are those which have a "good cry" to back them up, and those which are inevitably without a good cry. I need hardly say that the latter are the questions respecting which real patriots should most bestir themselves.

Ellesmere. I once saw a paper, I dare say it was written by one of us, indicating the difficulty which forks must have had in persuading men to take these useful implements into their hands, and to overcome the conservatism which resolutely stuck to fingers. I was delighted to find that in Mr. Smith's excavations at Nineveh he had found a fork. Queen Elizabeth, according to popular report, in early life at any rate, ate with her fingers, so you see how many generations it takes before the simplest improvement, that has no "good cry" with which to bless itself, must have before it can get itself adopted.

Milverton. You must forgive me, for the moment, if I take another illustration relating to what Ellesmere calls one of my manias—namely, the use of the bearing-rein.

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annual total has the terrible further meaning that each unit in it represents an indefinite (often very large) other number of cases, in which preventable disease, not ended in death, though often of far-reaching ill-effects on life, has also during the year been suffered."—*Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council and Local Government Board.* New Series. No. 1.

There is one *consensus*, as the theologians would say, prevailing amongst men who have studied horses and the use of draft cattle, which *consensus* declares that this detestable rein is useless, cruel, and productive of disease; and, moreover, that it deducts largely from the power of these draft cattle. Yet you cannot get it abolished, or even modified.

Mauleverer. What fools we are!

Sir Arthur. It is an excellent illustration. The good sort of people who possess horses, have no intention whatever of being cruel or unreasonable in their treatment of their horses. But the truth is, they cannot believe that there is anything much worth attending to in a matter which has no "good cry" to back it up. They expect a cry, and are unwilling to trust their own judgment until the "good cry" comes.

Mauleverer. What fools we are!

Ellesmere. I do believe that Mauleverer would like to pass his life as the principal leader of a chorus which should only have these four emphatic words to utter after any speech of any of the principal personages of the play.

Milverton. The moral of it all is exactly what Sir Arthur has said, that the more thoughtful men amongst us should labour to discern the questions which peculiarly require their support.

Sir Arthur. Encouraged by Milverton's praise, I will explain my ideas upon the subject more fully. It is not only that this class of men should favour and further

those great questions which I might almost call the dumb questions of the day, but that they should endeavour to reduce to their just proportions the noisy questions of the day. That noise is often produced by a comparatively small section of the community, and does not by any means represent the good sense, the convictions, or even the feelings of the community.

Mauleverer. What fools we are!

Ellesmere. Now you are unfortunate there in your refrain, for Sir Arthur means to indicate that there is a large amount of good sense in the community.

Sir Arthur. No; I am not prepared to say that, Ellesmere: I only mean that the thing which is ultimately carried is not the real result of the sense or nonsense, thought or thoughtlessness, of the community. It is carried by an energetic section; and, indeed, is more the consequence of good organization than of anything else. I do not wish to advocate unreasonable slowness of action, but I must say that I have seldom known any great political question which has had sufficient thought given to it before it was settled, or, to use a phrase of the day, which has been sufficiently ventilated beforehand. I am no bigoted Conservative, but I always delight in those measures which are called "great measures" being thrown overboard as the end of the session approaches—not because I wish them to be stifled, but because I wish them to have more mature consideration.

It always seems to me that one of the greatest errors which besets each generation, is that the generation will not consider what a long-lived thing a nation is, and how unimportant it is that any measure, however great, should be passed this year instead of next year, compared with the importance of its being a well-considered bit of legislation.

Milverton. Our Statute Book is mainly cumbered with the amending acts rendered necessary by hasty legislation in the first instance, that hasty legislation being also rendered ineffective by compromises made to prevent the loss of a single night of further debate.

Ellesmere. Moral, number two, expressed in the form of an aphorism—Always give the best of your thoughts to that subject about which nobody else is thinking.

Milverton. It is almost a poetic thing to imagine—the real poetry of life—a man's silently devoting himself to some social good purpose, in respect of which he has no hope of fame or fortune, and very little, indeed, of favour or support; when he foresees that, in all likelihood, he will merely be one of those devoted common soldiers whose bodies serve to fill up trenches, over which some fresh troop of their comrades, henceforth to be honoured with ribbons and medals, will advance to victory.

Lady Ellesmere. My quarrel with Leonard's lucubrations, and I am sure Mrs. Milverton will agree with me, is, that he is so prone to dwell upon discomforts which

only affect the body. Now don't be cross with me, Leonard; and don't think it impertinent of me, but I must say that to us, you almost always seem to think that if drains were well drained; that if there were plenty of air and light and food for everybody; that if there were no adulteration of food; that if there were plenty of recreation provided, especially for the lower classes—all would go well. It shows the hardness of men, that they think only, or chiefly, of these physical matters.

Ellesmere. Here is a sort of rebellion in the camp! I thought that the clergy, of whom you women are so fond, attended sufficiently to matters which are of a spiritual kind. I suppose you want Milverton to put down jealousy?

Milverton. I don't know about jealousy; but I think I could show you how anger and hate might be diminished.

Cranmer. I am with the ladies. I believe that if one could have the statistics—

Ellesmere. —Oh, of course, statistics!

Cranmer. —the statistics of annoyance and misery, the bulk of them would not be found to be physical.

Lady Ellesmere. The general striving to get higher, the wild love of competition, are evils untouched by good drainage or non-adulteration of food.

Milverton. This is very hard upon me. There is no living man who has contended more against the evils

and the misery produced by competition—the flies all striving to become beetles.

Ellesmere. No, no: dragon-flies. They do not wish to get out of their own order.

Milverton. One would really think, to hear Lady Ellesmere talk, that women were exempt from the influence of this fury of competition. That is certainly not the case; but, alas! I must confess that, in later times, they have not been such promoters of competition as we men have. You have made a good point of attack, Lady Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Yes: it is a most curious circumstance to be observed in the present day, that women have been more sensible than men in pronouncing against this all-devouring system of competition.

Milverton. You draw me from my main subject; but, as I shall not allow myself to be diverted from that subject in what I read to you, I do not care how errant from it you are in your conversations after the readings.

Ellesmere. This is very benevolent.

Milverton. I am ready to tell you what I think about this subject of competition. The only great check to be given to an exaggeration of competition, and, in short, its greatest preventative, is to instil a care for the thing to be done.

Cranmer. I don't understand.

Sir Arthur. I do. Milverton means, that if men were brought up to entertain a keen sense of the beauty

of knowledge, and of the judicious presentment of any intellectual subject, their pleasure would be in the perfection of the thing to be done, and not altogether in their doing it themselves.

Ellesmere. But this is dreamland.

Cranmer. You seem to forget, Milverton, that there are physical advantages attending mental success. The man naturally does not think so much about the thing being well done, as about his having a hand in doing it. Thence flow more consideration, more honours, perhaps more wealth, for himself.

Milverton. I cannot get over that difficulty.

There is one thing that has rather disappointed me. I knew that, as civilization progressed, there would be more objects for competition; and I hoped that this would check the evils of excessive competition in any one pursuit.

Cranmer. I am again hazy. I can never follow you men fast enough.

Ellesmere. I share your want of speed, Cranmer.

Milverton. Why, don't you admit that, as civilization advances, there are more careers in which a man can distinguish himself? Now, of late years, we have had a singular renewal of athletic pursuits. Being of a contrary opinion to the dons of colleges, I delight in those athletic pursuits. Not for the ordinary reasons which—

Ellesmere. Oh! of course not.

Milverton. —which are prominent with most people.

I delight in them because they open another field for excellence. One of the greatest objects we ought to have in view for mankind, one of the things which—if one were a superior being, to whom the fates and fortunes of mankind were entrusted—it seems to me one should look to most, is that no human being should be disheartened—

Ellesmere (*aside*). Then they must have no relations!

Milverton. —and that every one should have a career.

Ellesmere. Career is a very fine word, but not exactly applicable in the way in which Milverton has used it. I cannot call a devotion to athletic sports, fond as I am of them, a career. What I delight in is that there should be more ways of amusement provided for us all. This would make us wiser, more temperate, more sound in every way.

Milverton. I quite agree with you that there is but one great means of suppressing intemperance, and that is to provide other modes of amusement.

Ellesmere. I have always told you that no one, whether he be statesman, philosopher, or man of the world, except myself, who in my own proper person combine somewhat of the philosopher, statesman, and man of the world—

Cranmer. Oh! oh!

Ellesmere. —can imagine what a wild love for amusement there is in the hearts of men, especially in men

who dwell in northern climes, where the sun does not provoke to much sleepiness.

Only look at this fact. Hail a cab in any part of London where there is a large stream of passers-by. You will observe that several grown-up persons, and a large number of boys, will stop to see you get into the cab. That very commonplace transaction has some charm for them, their days being passed in such continuous dullness.

Sir Arthur. Ellesmere is right. I have noticed the same thing.

Ellesmere. I object, in general, to proverbs, aphorisms, and *dicta* of all kinds; but I cannot resist uttering this one. All vice is but dullness in another form—dullness made active.

Milverton. Without assenting to this sweeping aphorism, I am so far in agreement with Ellesmere, that I maintain that if you want to conquer a vice or a bad habit, you must introduce some good one to take its place. Judicious recreation is the only sure antidote to intemperance.

Ellesmere. Let us, therefore, now recreate, lest we should eat and drink too much at dinner. I propose that we should put aside all sensible talk, and walk along the banks of the river as far as Teddington. There is plenty of time. By suggesting such a long walk, we shall get rid gradually of all the philosophers, the statesmen, and the statistical people of our com-

pany; and for the last seven miles I shall be alone with the athletes of our party and with Fairy. Dogs, if you observe, are never tired. It is because they never go into competitive examinations, and never eat or drink more than is good for them. Good heavens! If we were only as clever as animals. If we could only make our reason as serviceable as their instinct, how happy we should be, and we should not need in our Easter holidays to listen to any of Milverton's discussions.

Sir John's proposal was received very coldly, upon which he said, "Well, if you will stay in-doors, I should like to know what Mr. Milverton meant when he said, 'I could show you how anger and hate might be diminished.'"

Ellesmere. If you can do that, Milverton, you will be a clever fellow—almost as clever as Seneca, who, if I recollect rightly, wrote a treatise upon anger which doubtless made all the Romans of his time, especially his charming pupil Nero, perfectly mild and placable. Sir Arthur looks astonished. He wonders how I should know anything about Seneca's writings. But he forgets that when we had some talk "About Animals and their Masters," he it was who showed us a passage in Seneca, who came to the wise conclusion, that wild

beasts were without anger, *feras irâ carere.* In my unlearned fashion, I had stupidly imagined that wild beasts, such as lions and tigers, were occasionally in a passion. Oh dear! how fatally mistaken we unlearned men should be, if we had not the learned to instruct us! I would not do Seneca injustice; and therefore I do not fail to remember that he said that wild beasts might have *rabies*, but not anger—never anger. The noble privilege of anger was reserved for man. Anger could not exist, except with reasoning creatures.

Milverton. Now that we have listened to Ellesmere's sneers, he will perhaps allow me to proceed.

Will he allow this proposition to be true—that no passion can long exist in the mind, which is utterly hopeless of gratification. Anger leads to hatred: hatred, in most cases, to a desire to injure.

Sir Arthur. Not in all cases, Milverton.

Milverton. To a desire in almost all cases that the hated person should be injured, if not by the hater, at least by some other person.

Now I contend that by no exercise of the imagination can you imagine anything which can injure a man.

Cranmer. This is a strong proposition! I never was more interested than to see how Milverton will get out of this difficulty.

Ellesmere. The ingenuity of sophists, my dear Cranmer, as well as that of schoolmen, is a thing which borders on the infinite.

Milverton. You must grant me a future life; though, for my own part, I think the proposition holds good even without that. I suppose you will admit that the moral nature of a man is almost the principal thing with which he is concerned, and even that in which most of his happiness or unhappiness is to be found.

Now picture to yourselves the state of any man whom you dislike. I will not suppose that such men as you indulge in hating anybody. There is, however, this man whom you dislike. Will you devise any mishap or misfortune that can befall him, of which you are sure that it will be an injury? He is a politician, we will say. You wish his measures to fail, himself to be ridiculed, his office to fall from him. I answer that these so-called mishaps are perhaps the best things that could possibly happen to him.

You dislike him so much, that you are not sorry even when domestic misfortune happens to him—say pecuniary loss, or bereavement. I answer, he is perhaps a very hard man, and this is the only way in which he can be softened.

Ellesmere. I think I have heard all this before, both in ancient and modern stories.

Milverton. Yes: but if you admitted the truth of it, you only did so in the case of those nicely-contrived stories. You did not see that the moral was absolutely of universal application. I defy you to show me any disaster that can happen to any human being which shall,

with your limited knowledge, satisfy you that it is a real injury to that man.

Then, what is the use of hating him? As regards other affections of the mind, you do not go on desiring that which you know to be utterly hopeless of acquirement. It is only very little children who stretch out their hands to grasp the moon or the stars. It is true that you might be malignant enough to wish that a man might become morally worse, or intellectually deteriorated; but you will find that when you are angry with him, you never wish anything so philosophically wicked. It is always some distinctly worldly evil that you are good enough to crave for him. That, as I have shown, is not necessarily an evil, may indeed be a great boon; and if you saw that fact clearly, you would cease to think ill-naturedly about him. Your anger and your hatred would drop off from you.

Mauleverer. What Milverton says is very sound, there is no sophistry in it: he forgets, however, that there is another side to the question. What becomes of your benevolence? If your malevolence is to have no force or meaning in it, what, I say, becomes of your benevolence?

Ellesmere. Oh! what a friend in argument is Mauleverer. It is delightful to have him on one's side.

Milverton. I confess that Mauleverer's friendliness in this case is very damaging; and I tremble for the fate

that a counteracting proposition, which I shall venture to make, will meet from him.

Mr. Milverton got up and walked about the room. This is a habit of his when he is in any great difficulty, and I knew he must be much perplexed—at length he resumed his seat.

Milverton. Upon the whole, prosperity is a good thing, morally speaking. What is the progress of mankind, what is civilization, but an attempt to increase that prosperity which should enable men to be better, to be greater, to subdue vice, ignorance, and selfishness? The lower the civilization, the less there is of nobility of all kinds, of tenderness of all kinds.

I contend, therefore, that we may exercise our benevolence to any extent upon this general proposition, and with this general purpose, though, at the same time, we may conclude that our malevolence, however directly gratified, may in no respect accomplish our desires.

Ellesmere. Shades of Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, if present on this occasion, how delighted you must be to listen to the discourse of a friend and a brother!

Sir Arthur. I am content to take my place in Ellesmere's disesteem with these mighty Shades. I

do not see anything sophistical in what Milverton has said. I wish that so great a theme, instead of being treated in this casual, conversational way, had been made the subject of a careful essay.

Milverton. I could not have said any more.

Lady Ellesmere. John does himself great injustice. I do not know any one who harbours less malice in his mind than he does. He would forgive you directly, however much you attempted to injure him.

Ellesmere. Oh! if one is to be praised by one's wife, the sooner one's modesty takes one away the better; and therefore, I for one, vote for discontinuing the conversation.

The others did not this time dissent, and so the conversation ended.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was a fine day, and we resolved to go out in a punt.

"A fishing-punt," said Sir John, when he consented to join this expedition, "is a mitigated evil, when compared with a boat. You can walk up and down it with tolerable safety. When it is moored in some rushy, plashy, reedy place, it is only a bad kind of open summer-house, situated in an unwholesome and insect-breeding spot. Oh, yes! I entirely consent to our going out in a punt. The ladies like it: they like anything by way of variety; and they become very tired of being with us in the house."

So we went out in a punt.

I am sorry to say that Sir John, who was the punter, very nearly got upset, holding

on stoutly to his punting-pole when it stuck in the mud, upon which he declaimed, in no measured terms, about the impossibility of being happy upon the water, whatever was the form of machine in which you trusted yourself on that detestable element.

At length, however, we were safely moored at a beautiful part of the river, not far from Kew Bridge, where the houses at Mortlake made a group of buildings which tempted Lady Ellesmere, no mean artist, to endeavour to make a sketch.

Ellesmere. Well, this is very pleasant. It must be delightful for Lady Ellesmere to have six admiring critics looking at each stroke of her brush.

Lady Ellesmere. Do talk some of your nonsense, John, and divert all this observant criticism from your poor wife.

Ellesmere. Shall it be a serious or a gay diversion, my dear?

Lady Ellesmere. Gay or serious, I do not mind, so that it is interesting, and makes you lose all thought of what I am doing.

Ellesmere. Well, then, it shall be serious; very serious. It shall not relate to what Milverton contemptuously

would call our miscellaneous and promiscuous essays. How the dull always despise the playful! It shall relate to a subject which it will please him to discuss, and which I have expected him to discuss, seeing it is *the* subject of the day.

Cranmer. *The* subject of the day is the change of ministry.

Milverton. Changes of ministry in our day are not so all-important; there is a thing called Public Opinion which controls all administrations.

Ellesmere. We had a hope when our holidays began, that Milverton was going to tell us of some things which would make us more comfortable; but it does not seem to me that his discourse has tended much in the direction of comfort.

Now, there are these Strikes. They are most uncomfortable things. I wish anybody could show how they could be made less uncomfortable. Of course, all you men who possess statecraft, have thought a great deal about such matters. It is your business to think about them.

Cranmer. The only hope I have is in education.

Ellesmere. Now, my good friend, that is really nonsense. I have heard all my lifetime what great things education is to do, but the great things have not been done. The good times, that education is to create, are, at least, fifty or sixty years off; and these Strikes are a present evil, a thing of to-day. Future reading,

writing, and arithmetic, though carried to any extent, even if they ever will effect the wonders that are expected from them, do not apply to the present case. They will not make coals cheap for us now.

Milverton. It is not education, it is experience, that is wanted; and this experience may be gained, comparatively speaking, in a very few years. It is true that there have been Strikes in all ages, but there never was such a sudden development of them as at the present time.

Then, too, you must remember that in former days there were guilds and corporate bodies of all kinds which made a great difference in these matters.

Now, though, as I said before, these Strikes are nothing new, yet in places where they are now breaking out, they are new things, and neither side knows exactly how to manage them. I believe that the experience, even of a very few years, would enable the parties concerned to conduct these things much more wisely.

There is a point of wisdom and of fairness to be arrived at—some just compromise. The thing is not an insoluble problem. Do you suppose that if we were to go down to the place where, at this moment, there is the most complicated Strike, that we could not, after hearing both sides, and carefully considering the matter, come to a reasonable conclusion—especially as we have a great lawyer amongst us?

What is wanting is, that the striking people and the struck people should have had sufficient experience of

strikes to appreciate their evils, to foresee their limits, and to understand, and be ready, in some sort, to acknowledge the larger and more far-sighted arguments which would weigh with us, the arbitrators. I agree with Ellesmere that education, in its ordinary sense, will not do this; but even some small experience may effect it.

Cranmer. What do you mean by those "larger and far-sighted arguments?"

Milverton. I mean, for instance, the effect of foreign competition when the price of the manufactured article is raised beyond a certain point. If it were to be so raised for any considerable time, there would be nothing left but emigration.

Sir Arthur. What do you think of co-operation?

Milverton. By all means let it be tried. But there is one terrible drawback to its success; and that relates to buying and selling.

I will illustrate what I mean, by what we call gentleman-farming. There are three hindrances to the success of that undertaking. First, the proneness of educated men to try new experiments; secondly, a possible want of vigilant overlooking; thirdly, the gentleman's inaptitude for buying and selling. The third is the greatest difficulty of all. I have known the two former difficulties thoroughly conquered; but hardly ever the third. And I will tell you the reason why.

The skilful, or, at least, the successful buyer or seller, should always be ready to buy and sell. He should

always be in a buying or selling mood. Some day I will tell you how the great Rothschild managed that part of his business. Now the gentleman-farmer has seldom this aptitude for buying or selling of which I have spoken. I regret this very much, for I think that farming is the most delightful, I may say the most fascinating, occupation in the world.

Cranmer. But I don't see, Milverton, how this applies to co-operation. You might have a very good buyer and seller in your co-operative association.

Milverton. Very true; but how should he ever continue to satisfy his associates? I am going now to appeal to a somewhat subtle fact in human nature, but a very assured one. After any bargain is concluded, there is nearly sure to be a reaction in the mind of the buyer or the seller, and often in the minds of both. "I should not have sold this for so little," "I should not have bought this for so much," are the words which are very apt to arise in their respective minds. But the experienced buyers and sellers learn to conquer these feelings. *Not so the interested bystander.* And, of course, he will sometimes be able to put his finger upon a bad bargain made in his behalf. Hence the co-operative buyer or seller will, after a time, become timid, and lose his market. This matter of buying and selling is essentially a despotic proceeding, and rarely admits of constitutional proceedings.

Sir Arthur. I think that this is almost undeniable.

Nevertheless, your friend, Experience, may come in here too, Milverton, and may enable some co-operations to succeed.

Milverton. I hope so; but you must remember that the co-operative associates will often have apparently just reason for blaming their manager as regards some particular case of buying and selling, which may be a very large one. Ask any great merchant whether, in the course of his career, he has not made a good many blunders. I think he will tell you that he has—that often, practically, he has only had a few minutes to decide whether he will take a thing or leave it; and he has taken it, or left it, wrongly. It is upon the average of his transactions, or rather upon the majority of them, that he has succeeded; and, if he had been called to account for the whole of them, he would have had but a sorry answer to make.

Sir Arthur. Tell us about the great Rothschild's mode of proceeding.

Milverton. Well, when I was a boy, there was a certain merchant, a near relative of mine, who would often condescend to talk to me, though a boy, about commercial matters.

Ellesmere. Can't you see the grave little Milverton looking up into the old merchant's face, and charming the old man by the attention he was giving to this commercial discourse?

Milverton. He said, "The great Rothschild's plan,

my dear boy, is this. He is away from his office all day long, on 'Change and elsewhere. And, in the course of the day, he makes twenty or thirty bargains. There is no writing: no lawyers are consulted. It is all word of mouth. And then Rothschild goes back to his office, and dictates to his clerks the substance of all these contracts he has made. You see, my dear, it is not like those peddling Frenchmen, who would require a great deal of pen, ink, and paper, to be used, and notaries to be employed. We British merchants are upon honour, and trust one another." The good merchant's intention was to show me the superiority of our British modes of procedure; but I now mention the fact for a different reason. Do you think if Rothschild had had to deal with these matters as the buying and selling member of a co-operative society, he could have conducted them so fearlessly, and, therefore, upon the whole, so judiciously? Doubtless he, too, skilful as he was, committed errors, which also, doubtless, he kept to himself.

Time is the main element in all human affairs; and if a man has to explain, and partially to justify his blunders, a great deal of his valuable time will be wasted. To explain how and why the milk came to be spilled, is almost as silly as to cry over it when spilt.

Ellesmere. I am curious to know why Milverton thinks farming such a delightful occupation.

Milverton. For the most commonplace reasons. In the first place, it is an out-of-doors occupation, for the

most part in good air. The value of health is always underrated. I will venture to say, that several thousand times in the course of to-day, the following words, or something like them, will be uttered: "The first consideration should be your health." Of all advice this is the most frequently given, and the most frequently neglected.

Ellesmere. I am sure such a commonplace reason is not the chief one that makes Milverton admire and envy a farmer's life so much.

Milverton. Well, perhaps, it is more delightful, intellectually speaking, than even physically. You may laugh as much as you like, but it is so. Ineradicable in mankind is the love of speculation—the fondness for submitting their affairs to chance. This the farmer enjoys, without the extreme danger that attends speculation in most other pursuits. Each day's weather, a matter of mere gossip to us townsfolk, is of deep interest to him. Nature is perpetually carrying on, or thwarting, his speculations; and his life is a life of ups and downs, the ups and downs not being of exceeding magnitude. His calling has somewhat of the fascination of whist. There is skill to be shown in the game, but there is also an immense deal of chance. Mr. Clay once lost sixteen games running. And so, both in farming and at whist, one can always lay the blame of failure upon something besides one's own want of skill.

Ellesmere. Upon my word this is a very ingenious

eulogy; but, somehow or other (I can't tell how it is) the world in general has got an idea into its head, that agricultural people are somewhat slow and stupid, notwithstanding their immense advantages. The agricultural labourer, for instance, occupies a low place in our regard, intellectually speaking.

Milverton. I do not wish to be rude, but I do assure you, Ellesmere, that it is your ignorance which leads you to form such a conclusion. To speak frankly, you do not know how to talk to an agricultural labourer. You have not the requisite information. With the clever artisan, mechanic, or factory-hand, you are, doubtless, more at home. His occupation is much more within your ken. And then he talks politics, you talk politics; and, eventually, you find that he has a great deal to say about political matters which it is worth your while to listen to. Whereas the mind of the agricultural labourer is a sealed book to you.

Sir Arthur. You will never convince Ellesmere, unless you can show him in detail wherein the intelligence of the agricultural labourer consists.

Milverton. It may seem boastful, but I must premise what I am going to say, by mentioning that, for many years, I was a careful student of agriculture, and even that poor book-knowledge enabled me to talk with agricultural people. I will give you a specimen of the sort of talk.

George Swan (you remember him, in the cottage

nearest to us, a lean man, with a hooked nose) is coming up our lane at the back of the kitchen-garden. I look over the dwarf wall to greet him. He asks after my missus, I ask after his, and hear that she is pretty well, but that Mary Jane is terrible bad with her teething, whereupon George adds, that he can't see why teeth should be such a "terrible worrit" to us, all through our lives—a remark which most of us have made, though perhaps in different language.

George is one of Farmer Smithson's labourers. I then say, "So you are going to put the fifteen-acre field into turnips again? I don't think it will do."

"Well, master, you are 'cute there, for one as hasn't a call to know; but I says so too. He is as good a master, is Farmer Smithson, as any man ever had, and he is main clever with cattle. But he is that obstinate when he has once said a thing, nothing can drive un out of it. I told un that he'd never get turmits there."

"But why, George; what's your reason?"

"I think it's that there six-foot hedge he's so fond of. You mind we tried turmits three years agone, and for a matter of twenty yards from the hedge, there warn't a single one that came to nothink."

"I suppose, George, the fly likes shelter from the north winds?"

"No, it bean't that," replies George with a grin. "You mun have forgot, master; our hedge is to the

west. But do you mind that there and thereabouts it's always the moistest part of the fifteen-acre? Them beasts (he meant the turnip-flies) comes with changes. Sun to-day, rain to-morrow, that brings un out rarely."

"Yes, I have noticed that."

"Now that there hedge gi'es them a change just when they're young; and like our cattle, they allays do better when they can get a change two or three times in the day."

Well, then, George and I go into a discussion as to the best modes of battling with "them beasts," the turnip-flies. He doesn't "hold to" most of my suggestions, merely made from book-knowledge, which he contradicts by so-called experience. One or two, however, of these plans he receives with a certain amount of favour: and then we part.

It is difficult for me to convey to you the sense and shrewdness of his remarks, mixed, however, with a certain amount of prejudice, the like of which you will find in all callings and professions.

What do you say, Ellesmere, to the elaborate system of pleading, which you had to learn before you were called to the bar? Did not prejudice keep that up for a long period?

Cranmer. He is not far wrong there, Ellesmere.

Milverton. I maintain that the agricultural labourer is often a man of great observation, of nice skill in his

handiwork (I wish you knew the difficulty of ploughing a straight furrow), and of powers of reasoning, quite as much developed as those of the men of other crafts. One of the greatest mistakes, which you highly-educated men make, is, to underrate the powers of reasoning which your humbler brethren possess. You cannot perhaps overrate the vanity of men, their natural indolence, the continuous effect of their early prejudices, and the like; but you almost always overrate what you are pleased to call their stupidity. Nearly all men of average capacity can follow even long trains of reasoning, if you will only put your reasoning into language that is not unfamiliar to them.

Sir Arthur. It is rather ill-natured of me, but I think I could take down Milverton's excessive delight in the country, and in the joys of farming, by mentioning to him that music is a delight not very compatible with the life of his ideal farmer. Music belongs to towns, and the best music only to the greatest towns. How will you make up your mind to give up that joy, Milverton?

Milverton. You have made a very palpable hit. I do own that farming and music are the two most charming things in the world, and that one must sometimes be sacrificed to the other.

Ellesmere. I never met with any one so music-mad as Milverton. Before now, he has stopped me in one of my sweetest arguments—perhaps an argument on his

side of the question—to listen to a wretched barrel-organ playing in the street.

Milverton. I do not know that I could ever make any of you understand what music presents to my mind. I overheard Ellesmere the other day telling my wife, with his usual maliciousness, knowing that music is one of her greatest pleasures, that it was a most sensual thing (he did not even use that mitigated word, sensuous), and that highly intellectual people either ignored it altogether, or pointed out, as Mill had done, its narrow limits. She seemed rather shocked, and to feel that she had been very sensual all her life without knowing it.

Now music presents to me all forms of order, all forms of harmony, intellectual and moral, as well as physical. It selects out of millions of particulars—to talk of its limited nature is most absurd—those which are most suitable to be brought together. It represents the highest modes of organization. It is a theatre in which every phase of human life can be best pourtrayed. Its very discords, as in real life, can be so beautifully introduced, as to raise the hearer into some new and higher sphere of harmony, hitherto unknown or unappreciated by him. I tell you again, as I have told you before, that I "hold to," as we farmers say, the words of dear old Sir Thomas Browne, "That tavern music which makes one man merry and another mad, evokes in me a sense of divine harmony and a full

belief in the beneficence of the Divine Creator." Those are not the exact words, but they will recall to your minds the passage.

If I had anything very difficult to do, whether to write a tragedy or a comedy, or to draw an Order in Council, let me hear music played while I am endeavouring to do it; and much of the difficulty seems to vanish.

Then it is the finest form of education that has ever been devised. A noble training is accomplished, mostly without any pedantry, almost unconsciously; and, observe this, with less accretion of vanity than in any other way.

Ellesmere. Again, I say, we are soaring amid lofty regions into which this heavy body cannot rise. I feel like an unwilling and sceptical attendant at a spiritual *séance*, during which stout personages are lifted into upper air, where, however, such an unspiritual person as I am cannot follow them. Lady Ellesmere, I see, has finished her sketch. Let us dispunt ourselves, and walk home. The benevolent Cranmer will take the ugly thing home; or if not, I will make myself a beast of burden and drag it along by the towing-path.

The "benevolent" Cranmer consented to take the punt back; and the rest of us walked home.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. MILVERTON seems to me to make a great effort to choose his opportunities for introducing the various subjects, upon which he desires to lay his thoughts, before his friends. Whatever Sir John Ellesmere may say, I know that Mr. Milverton is most anxious to hear the criticisms of his friends upon his essays, and that he has a constant fear lest what he may suggest on these practical matters should not, in the least, be practicable.

There had now been a considerable interval after his last essay on Administration. He put this fact before the "Friends in Council," and gained their consent to listen to another section of his work.

This consent was attained on the evening

after our punting expedition, and the next morning was fixed for the reading of the section. Mr. Milverton introduced it thus:

Milverton. There is no occasion for commencing what I have to say with what Ellesmere, delighting in fine long Latinized words, is pleased to call an *exordium*. It originally belonged to the essay I read last; but I made a separation of it, fearing lest you should all be wearied with the long continuance of the same subject. For it is the same subject. Do you see what I am endeavouring to put before you?

Ellesmere. Now, Cranmer, do be honest, and confess that you do not see.

Cranmer. I shall say nothing of the kind.

Ellesmere. Well, then, I will. It has always been a theory of mine, that in sermons, speeches, essays, and theological treatises, you can hardly too often reiterate, in few words, the substance of what you mean to assert, or to prove. I do a man a great service, when I remind him of that fact.

Milverton. Thank you, Ellesmere. My object is this. I have pointed out to you several social evils. I believe that some remedies may be found for them by judicious administration. I then endeavour to show you how administration, without being made more interfering, may be made more forcible and effective. With this

purpose, I resume the discussion of questions which, though partly political, have, indirectly at least, great influence upon administration.

Sir Arthur. Read on, Milverton. We quite understand what your object is, and how you would attain it.

Mr. Milverton commenced reading, and this is what he read:—

CHOICE OF MEN FOR OFFICES.

Another great evil in our political arrangements, and one which has had a bad effect in all matters of social reform, is, the limitation of choice which is produced by certain appointments being only capable of being held by members of Parliament. Now, here is a real grievance—one which affects all the highly educated and highly cultivated people in the country. It is a grievous fact to state, that, when an office of the kind I allude to is vacant, there should only be two or three candidates capable of being appointed. We sometimes wonder at the choice which an Administration makes on

such occasions; but we forget how exceedingly limited is its power of choosing. It frequently happens that an additional element of limitation is thrown in by the fact that the person to be chosen must be pretty secure of his re-election for a seat in Parliament.

It is well always to be specific: I allude especially to such offices as that of the Post-Master-General, and of the First Commissioner of Works. I admit that it is desirable that such appointments should not be permanent, and should undergo the changes which are requisite in other political appointments. Otherwise we should have one mode of thought and action too prevalent; and, as Tennyson says:

"Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

But this limitation of choice is quite another thing; and, if we really cared for good administration, would be quite indefensible.

To my mind, it is also indefensible that the road to the highest legal appointments should lie through political partizanship, and should be dependent upon the secure

possession of a seat in Parliament. Here, again, I admit that there is something to be said on the other side, and that these great legal appointments have, for the most part, found worthy recipients for them. But, often, it must have been a great derangement of the studies and pursuits for which such men have been most fit, that they should have been obliged to seek for the favour of some electoral body, before their great legal attainments could have had full scope. I believe that the difficulty of obtaining sound and deliberate legal reform, has been much increased by the necessity, which the greatest lawyers have felt themselves under, of acquiring political favour with some body of constituents. And we cannot say that, without making some great and remarkable exceptions, lawyers have shown themselves to be able statesmen. In the case of these exceptions, I think it may almost always be said that there was more in the man of the statesman than of the lawyer. Much as I wonder that the general

body of educated and cultivated men have not protested in the case of certain civil appointments, that the choice should be limited to members of Parliament, I wonder more that the legal profession, perhaps the most powerful body in the community, has not recalcitrated against the practice of its principal offices being conferred upon those who have had the good fortune, or the political skill, to meet with obliging constituencies.

An objection which will be taken immediately, by practical men, to the foregoing observations, is this—that every great department, even though its character and its objects are not in the remotest degree political, must yet have the means of making itself heard in Parliament, and, to use the common phrase of the day, be represented there. I feel deeply the force of this objection, but must contend that the evil is not so great as that of the limitation of choice which I have described.

Moreover, a remedy might be provided to

meet this difficulty. It might be admitted that persons holding the appointments I have alluded to, should have an official seat in Parliament, and be able to declare the policy of their department, in the House of Commons, or in the House of Lords.

This would be a great change in the present system, but I believe that it is a change which, in the course of events, will become necessary. It is not altogether unwise to see what we can borrow from the wisdom of other nations; and one of the good points, as it appears to me, of the American constitution, is, that the ministers are independent of parliamentary position. We could probably improve upon their practice in this respect. We could still insist upon the principal political personages obtaining, and being able to retain, the favour of individual constituencies. There are offices, however, which we might judiciously make somewhat independent of this favour.

I fear, that, with the general political

world, it is hardly perceived how much more difficult government has become. Subsequently to the days of our ancestors (take the times of George III., for instance), the Press has risen into great power—and deservedly into great power. There are now a number of persons of much political ability, who devote all their leisure to a real study of political questions. They write from day to day their views upon these questions, and they have the advantage of possessing an immense audience. Sometimes they are most serviceable to statesmen: sometimes they are an embarrassment, on account of their not possessing all the facts which should enable them to come to a right judgment upon urgent political affairs.

The main point I want to show forth, is, that they constitute a great power, over which, as a general rule, statesmen have very little hold. To meet this power—even to make the best use of its intelligence—it is needful that government, speaking of it

in the abstract, should have new facilities granted to it, to meet the increase of force in other and not always friendly powers.

Would it not be well, under these circumstances, that there should be a few official seats in Parliament? We need have no fear of a ministry oppressing us by means of these seats, which might be limited to some such number as ten. If there were any such fear, it might be still further controlled by the holders of these seats being deprived of the power of voting.

There can hardly be any doubt that the various administrations which have introduced measures of electoral reform, have, upon the whole, acted wisely. It was impossible that the state of things previous to the first Reform Bill could be maintained. Nevertheless, all thoughtful politicians foresaw then, and foresee now, that these electoral reforms were not all gain. For a man to become a statesman, it is necessary that he should have some training for the part; and, no doubt, it was a great

advantage, in former times, that a leading minister could look out for young men of much ability, who showed great aptitude for political or administrative work; and when, by means of that ungainly thing called "a Rotten Borough," he could at once place a young man in a position which would show whether this aptitude would be developed, and whether there was in the young man the making of a statesman. The advantage thus possessed by a powerful minister—an advantage much more conducive to the welfare of the State than to his own benefit—may be seen by the following consideration. It is not for the mere acquisition of suitable knowledge that it is desirable to introduce men early into political life. A far greater gain results from this early training—namely, the habit of decisiveness, and the power of enduring great and sudden responsibility. After a certain time of life, these habits are rarely acquired, especially in any new form of thought or endeavour, although the person in question may have

acquired these habits in another sphere of action.

The representation of the electors of this country appears likely to fall more and more into the hands of middle-aged men, who have acquired some fame, or some local influence, from their success in other pursuits than those of politics. We can easily see the disadvantage of this state of things if it prevailed in other branches of human effort. An army officered by men who had obtained the suffrages of their fellow-countrymen would never fight, or, at least, would never be led to victory. And it is a vain dream to suppose that good leaders for political action will often be found in the ranks of those who have not made politics the business of their lives. It must be obvious to every one, that there is some prospect of this danger being realised; and it is a very serious danger. If, therefore, by any plan, however apparently anomalous, any safeguards can be provided to counteract the evil, the plan may be worth con-

sidering. The one at present proposed would enable an administration to produce before the country men who might possess all the qualifications for statesmanship, except that conventional one which insists upon their being hereditary peers, or their being able to find a constituency which should at once recognize their merits, and resist all local influence, in order to bring those merits into prominence. You cannot conceive that this will ever be done, because, according to my hypothesis, these candidates are to be young men. A minister may be able to judge of the aptitude for statesmanship of a Chatham, a Pitt, a Fox, a Sheridan, a Burke, a Wyndam, a Gladstone, or a Disraeli, while he is yet a youth, perhaps fresh from College. But a constituency is likely to ask the severe Napoleonic question, What has he done? and, Why should we give our suffrages to an unknown and an untried man? Hence there comes a dearth of youthful statesmen. And it is by no means easy to show how this void

can be replenished, unless we are prepared to adopt some plan of the kind I have ventured to recommend, or unless we resort to those modes of election which have been, somewhat superciliously, called "Fancy Franchises."

The foregoing considerations may appear to have little to do with our main subject; but the truth is, that social reforms of a delicate and difficult kind require, far more than other reforms, the existence of an early-trained and well-educated body of statesmen.

Milverton. I have now laid before you one division of my subject. Previously, however, to concluding this reading of mine, I should like to put before you another branch of it. This is not in immediate connection with what I have just read, but is consequent upon it. We have been considering the question of Parliamentary Representation. Quite as important in this free country is the question of Local Government. Are you tired, or will you hear now what I have to say upon that?

Sir Arthur. We are ready to hear it.

Mr. Milverton then read as follows:—

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The unit of local government, is the thing to be sought for. In an old country, such as ours, there is exceeding difficulty in getting at this unit, and clearly defining it. If this unit could be a municipal corporation, great expense would be saved—a point of immense importance, considering the heavy pressure which local rates and taxes bring upon poor householders. Moreover, the adoption of this unit would bring much clearness and distinctness into local administration.

I am bound, however, to give you the other side of the question. It is doubtful whether such a body would always well fulfil the functions now performed by Improvement Commissioners, Road Trustees, Burial Boards, and Sanitary Committees—the members of which bodies are chosen (I believe by the ratepayers) on account of special knowledge, or of supposed especial

interest as regards the respective subjects in question.

Again, you are sure to ask me, what is to become of the purely rural districts? We cannot expect municipal corporations to take any care of them.

With regard to them, I look forward to a great improvement, which I trust will by degrees be made, in county administration. I will tell you how the whole thing presents itself to my mind. The original unit is the parish, all the parishes being originally, we will suppose, subject to the administration of the county. Then there comes an agglomeration of people upon one spot. Peculiar necessities for special administration arise at that spot; and, if the number of people is sufficiently large, a municipal corporation ought to be formed.

The plan adopted in a neighbouring country, of a high officer of Government being entrusted with the superintendence of all the affairs of an extensive district, seems a very feasible one.

Considerable disadvantages have, however, resulted from that species of local government; but this may be from the peculiar nature of the people, and might not apply to a country where liberty is well understood.

I return to the subject of municipal corporations. There is no doubt, I think, that these would be the best units of local government for towns, if only we could be sure that municipal officers would be selected, without any reference to party ties, and would be the really efficient men in their separate localities. But, if a man is to be chosen as a member of a Sanitary Committee, or to be made an Improvement Commissioner, merely because he is an alderman or a common-councilman, then the thing will fail.

We come to the original difficulty in all human affairs, namely, the choice of men—that choice being very nearly as important in small civic matters as in imperial affairs.

Great fault is now being found with the

management of railway affairs. The chief source of this mismanagement is that the choice of a governing body is restricted to those who possess money qualifications which do not, by any means, ensure the possession of other greater qualifications.

If, as occurs in fables, mankind could ask and receive some boon from the gods, the best thing perhaps to be asked would be that they should understand their fellow-men. Often, now, those are entrusted with this choice who have not the slightest faculty for making it. Talk of their understanding men, they would not even understand chessmen! I do not mean this as a jest, but as a reality. You find persons high in power who never seem able to perceive the speciality of any person or thing they seek to use; and are incapable of fully realising that the knight cannot do what the bishop can, and *vice versâ*.

I have hitherto said nothing about those details of sanitary legislation, which, whatever form of local government may prevail,

must be carefully considered. It is a thorny part of the subject, cumbered with many difficulties. I will tell you what I think would be the best plan; and then, hereafter, it might be seen how near to that plan the administration could be arranged.

In the first place two things are wanted, local action and central supervision. Much depends upon the size of what we will call "health districts." They should not be too large for the effectual work of one Health Officer: they should not be so small as that the officer chosen should be much under the control of local influence.

As regards the choice of these officers, I would not restrict it to any profession. I have known men who would be singularly fitted to become Health Officers, who were not doctors or lawyers, nor belonging to any learned profession.

You see, after all, the questions to be dealt with are seldom of a very complex character, nor are they such as require that peculiar knowledge which is only to be

fully gained in a profession. In this matter, as in most others, the great thing is to get a man who has the art of managing, who has tact, and energy, and pleasantness of behaviour. A man of that kind, endowed as he will be with the powers of persuasion, can sometimes carry through a difficult plan which the most scientific man in the world, without these gifts, would ignominiously fail in carrying.

Then there comes a point for discussion which is a vital one. It is never well that there should be any employment for men in which there is no opportunity of rising. If you give these appointments in all cases to persons who have other employments, if you make the Health Office a mere adjunct to some other employment, you run a great chance of its being treated by him as a mere adjunct, and occupying only the spare moments of his thought. You tend to make him, in that matter, an amateur, rather than a professional.

But how is this scheme of promotion to be

provided for? There are two ways. One is, that even in the local administration, there should be offices of larger sway and of a more extensive district than those now entrusted to the ordinary Officer of Health of the primary class. This might be effected by several of the primary districts being under the supervision of a higher officer, appointed, we will say, by the County.

In addition to this, there might be promotion to the offices of Inspectors of the Central Board, who should be men of much skill and capacity. Into this body, as vacancies occurred, those persons might be introduced who had distinguished themselves in local administration.

I have now put before you a scheme which, I think, would have the elements of good work in it; but, of course, one can seldom expect that an abstract scheme of this kind will be at once adopted. The object should be to work up to it, or to some better plan, as closely as the circumstances of the time will allow you. One should

always have a distinct plan of some kind in one's view. The British public will seldom permit of its being adopted at once, but you have to come to it by degrees.

Another matter, in reference to this subject, seems to me of great importance. I distrust the agglomeration of offices and functions which has been so frequently effected in modern times. It seems to me that the health of the nation is a subject sufficiently large in itself to require a separate branch of administration, with a minister at the head of it; and that it has been unwise to add this branch to the Presidency of the Poor-Law Board. The functions seem to be essentially different. In the one case, judicious restraint appears to be the principal function: in the other, judicious enlargement and development of action. I should imagine that it would rarely happen that any one man would possess the requisite qualifications for filling, as a minister, both these high posts of president of the Poor-

Law-Board, and president of my imaginary Board of Health. But, indeed, the allotment of official work is, at present, very ill-managed throughout most of the departments of the State.

Again there was a demand from all the persons present, that there should be no conversation now, and that time should be given them to make up their minds as to what they should comment upon, as regards the various topics which Mr. Milverton had submitted to them in the foregoing section of his work.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN the afternoon of the same day came the conversation upon the foregoing essay.

Ellesmere. Do you remember what I said a long time ago about the necessity for the trumpet? I forget the exact words; but they were to this effect: If a man has a force which is represented by ten, and that man wants to effect something, he may devote three parts of this force to doing the thing, but must reserve the other seven-tenths to blowing the trumpet about it when it is done.

Milverton. I recollect something of the kind.

Ellesmere. Well, this great saying applies still more to writing than to doing. I don't say that any of your suggestions are absurd. Some of them, indeed, appeared to me to be practical and practicable. But I do say that they will never be carried into effect, unless they are blown about by alien trumpets, as well as by your own.

Sir Arthur. All that you mean, Ellesmere, is that, for the most part, it is a different set of men who suggest things, from those who carry them into effect.

Cranmer. We all know that. There never was a more notable instance of the truth of the remark, than what befell the Corn Laws and Free Trade generally. The argumentative part of the question was fully worked out long before the men, who were to make those arguments go down with the world, arrived to the fore.

Mauleverer. I will show you where lies one of the greatest difficulties in this matter. I suppose that, though you deem me to be a pessimist, you will allow that I am not far wrong when I assert that the number of foolish people in the world exceeds the number of the sensible people in the world.

Ellesmere. I do not see much harm in admitting the truth of that statement. Something of the same kind has, occasionally, when I have been dyspeptic, occurred to myself. What then?

Mauleverer. There will be a number of proposals made in writing or speech, and some of them will be wise, and some will be foolish. The foolish proposals will, naturally, be accepted by the foolish majority of human beings; and the alien trumpets that Ellesmere speaks of, will chiefly be heard blowing about a screed of doctrine which is especially foolish, but which is entirely suitable to the trumpeters.

One of the silliest ideas, one of the most unpracticable, that I ever heard, was that the accretions of the value of land made by extraneous causes—I mean by causes extraneous to the labours of the landowner—should be awarded to the State. Of course the whole of the spare intellect of mankind would be given to the ascertainment of this accretion of value. It would be requisite that every other educated human being should be either a land-surveyor or a lawyer. But you will find, that such a proposal, in spite of its absurdity, or on account of that very absurdity, will find many favourers, many people to blow these alien trumpets. Whereas, a sensible suggestion (not that I pledge myself by any means to say that Milverton's suggestions are sensible) will, as naturally, find but few favourers. Sense is dull: nonsense is generally lively; and the world delights in life and animation.

Ellesmere. Upon my word, there is nobody who has such rivers of cold water to pour down the backs of unhappy suggestive people, as our good friend Mauleverer. It is a beautiful future, though, that he depicts for us, when every other man is to be a land-surveyor, or a lawyer.

Milverton. That was a pregnant saying of Burke's, that when bad men combine, good men should associate. Now putting aside the bad men, I would merely say, that good men should combine for the higher purposes, as well as for the lower. I am not one of those who

are frightened by the combinations of the present day. Indeed, I suspect that much good may come from them. But, for the most part, they are combinations to effect some distinctly material end, such as the rise of wages, or the diminution of the hours of labour. But, when men are more educated, they will see how necessary is combination to effect much higher aims. That very combination to which Cranmer alluded, though it was a combination devoted to procure a mere material end, was of a thoroughly unselfish kind, and had reference to great principles of thought and action.

Sir Arthur. I wish that men would devote themselves to furthering the projects and the aims of some man who is greater than themselves, or at least more suggestive.

Ellesmere. Well, since I have formed one of the Friends in Council, I have heard many vast propositions put forward, but never any like this. Are you aware, Sir Arthur, that most people are rather vain? and yet you want them to devote themselves to a kind of hero-worship—the heroes being alive, and having only made sensible propositions, which, as Mauleverer has told you, will probably be rather dull and prosaic.

My quarrel with Milverton is, that he believes too much in government. His suggestions always smack of officiality, if I may invent such a term.

Cranmer. Well, how should they be otherwise?

Ellesmere. There is no day, since we have been

together this Easter—no day after Milverton read his first section of his first essay upon the evils attending the bigness of great towns, that I have not endeavoured, with my limited capacity for such thoughts, to see whether I could make any suggestion that would be of any value; and, in the end, I always came back to Cranmer's "lights, easements, privileges." You see how generous I am, Cranmer. You always attack me, or delight when anybody else attacks me; but when you say anything admirable, I always admire it.

I don't see anything to be done but providing large spaces to be kept intact—a suggestion of no novelty—indeed it has entered into a common phrase, the providing lungs for the metropolis. Cranmer was quite right when he said that you could not, in this free country, prevent men from building where they liked, and as they liked.

Milverton. I do not think, Ellesmere, that you perceive the immense advantage of having these subjects ventilated. I have a faith, it may be a weak one, in the good intentions and good dispositions of the greater part of mankind. Mauleverer ridiculed the proposition that certain accretions of the value of land should be brought to the treasury of the State. If that project has captivated the minds of any writers or thinkers, it is because the minds of those writers and thinkers have been more sensitive than the minds of other men, to the enormous evils which exist among us;

and they clutch at anything which seems to promise any good for the world. There are hundreds, it may be thousands, of persons anxious to do what good they can; and, in this matter of providing open spaces to feed with something like pure air the lungs of the metropolis, there are, no doubt, many wealthy men who, if the question were well put before them, would devote some portion of their riches to this end.

I must now endeavour to answer the attack which Ellesmere made upon me, as regards my suggesting as remedies nothing but what was of a governmental or official kind.

Come close to the point. Do you believe, or do you not believe, that my suggestion that sanitary inspectors should be formed into a kind of official hierarchy, is judicious or not?

Allow me to go into details. Your inspector, in any neighbourhood, is liable, especially if his salary is a small one, to be too much dependent upon the opinion or the favour of his neighbours—that is, if he has nothing else to look to. But if, by diligent and unprejudiced work, he can attain the favour of his official superiors, and that that favour can produce a rise in his official rank, we have a motive which may stem and conquer all his neighbourly affections He will then denounce all nuisances boldly.

Again, official or not, was my suggestion that a larger choice of men for certain offices should be

allowed—a reasonable suggestion? One would think sometimes, to hear you talk, Ellesmere, that official life was a thing apart from ordinary life, and that we, in offices, were employed from morning till night in writing letters to one another, which do not at all concern the public. I only want some of the principles and practices which lead to success in other branches of human effort, to be adopted in official life. What would you think of a merchant who only chose the men to work with him, or under him, from their having a peculiar form of nose? That is not a more absurd limitation than that the supply of men to fill certain offices in the State—offices demanding great conversancy with details—should be limited to those who have a secure seat in Parliament.

Ellesmere. What I am going to say has nothing whatever to do with the present subject; but I must say it. In one of your early discourses, you said something of this kind—that the bad atmosphere of London prevented, to some extent, the healing of wounds in hospitals. I doubted the fact, and so, I believe, did Cranmer. But I must tell you that, if this slowness of healing be a fact, I have heard a very different reason given to account for it—namely, that it arises from a certain subtle source of injury caused by several wounded or sick people being brought into somewhat close contact.

Milverton. Thank you for the correction, if it be

a correction. I have, as you know, a horror of exaggeration, or of pressing any argument too far.

You have certainly brought forward something which may damage that particular statement of mine as regards the quality of the London atmosphere. On the other hand, I have heard something which singularly confirms my statement of its corrosive influence. You have all, doubtless, heard of Sir Rutherford Alcock, and how he represented our interests in China. He visited the Chinese wall, and brought back two bricks from it. I do not pretend to determine for how many centuries those bricks had kept their form, and betrayed no signs of decay, in that atmosphere. But those centuries must have been many. Sir Rutherford put these two bricks out in the balcony of his house in London. This was about two years ago. One of these bricks has already gone to pieces, being entirely disintegrated by the corrosive influence of the London atmosphere. This fact was stated, I believe, to the Geographical Society the other day.

Ellesmere. Could it have been simple breakage?

Milverton. No; the effects of breakage and corrosion are as different as can possibly be, and could not deceive a practised observer such as Sir Rutherford.

There is something which I have never brought before you when propounding any scheme of sanitary improvement, but which will come in appropriately now. I must admit that all these schemes require money.

I must also admit that rates for such purposes are sufficiently high now; and I do not wonder that the rated classes often resist a proposed improvement, which they know to be a real improvement, solely because they have a wholesome dread of the increase of their rates. But if they would only look a little forward, they would see that eventually their rates would be lowered. Our defects in the application of sanitary science tend to make many heads of families unrateable, and also throw great additional burdens upon that most important of all rates, the poor-rate. The great art of taxation is to make many persons taxable.

Ellesmere. That is a grand maxim—the sort of thing that Chancellors of the Exchequer should have inscribed on the walls opposite to their beds.

Milverton. I will give you an instance of what I mean. Under Lord Shaftesbury's auspices, a new town for working people is being raised at no great distance from the metropolis. If the Earl succeeds in his excellent project, there will be a great number of rateable persons in that community, and there will be very few persons who will have to come upon the poor-rate. If you could make decent habitation, for that class of the community, the rule and not the exception, you would find that rates would greatly diminish, while, at the same time, much greater sanitary effect would be produced by this lower rating.

Until you have tried to follow and record any conversation, you can hardly imagine how desultory all conversation is. These friends probably keep much closer to the point than most people; but even they wander about in thought and talk, amazingly. I cannot tell how it was that the conversation at this moment suddenly deviated into a discourse about beautiful women. I have some notion, however, that the point of junction arose from some one saying, how important it was to have the women with you, when you proposed any social reform; and then, I imagine, that some one must have said, "Especially those who are beautiful." Anyhow it came to this, that Mr. Milverton made the following startling remark:—

Milverton. There is no excess of beauty in the aristocracy of this country. Very graceful they are, very pleasant, and, upon the whole, they talk very well, but, as for beauty, you must go to the classes below them, and very low down too. The day after to-morrow is a general holiday. There will be great

crowds of people collected near here, to enjoy that holiday. They will not, by any means, belong to what you call the aristocracy. I am not a betting man, but I will bet you anything, that I will show you more feminine beauty in these gatherings of what you will call common people, than you have ever seen in the aristocracy.

Ellesmere. Done, for a guinea.

Accordingly, on the day in question, we attended some of these gatherings; and, after much contention on Sir J. Ellesmere's part, all the friends were obliged to confess that, in the course of the two hours we spent in this way, Mr. Milverton had succeeded in pointing out to us fifty or sixty girls or women, who were certainly remarkably good-looking. It was decided that Sir John Ellesmere had lost his bet.

As we walked home, Mr. Milverton and Sir Arthur lagged behind; and I went forward with Sir John Ellesmere and the rest of the party. Sir John said:—

Ellesmere. Do you remember what I mentioned in our first walk here? How there were men who had a

great respect for their opinions; formed them with care; and neglected no means of defending them? Milverton, I see, is one of that sort. He thinks it of great importance, if not for the world, at any rate for himself, that Leonard Milverton's opinions should be always sound and secure.

Cranmer. How few men lose bets with perfect good humour!

Ellesmere. I was mightily puzzled as to what was the ruling thought in Milverton's mind, when he began that disquisition about the beauty of women. What he cares most about, are not beautiful women, but beautiful theories—chiefly his own. He let the cat out of the bag when he said once or twice, as you must have noticed he did, when he was showman to these beauties of his, "You see that healthiness is a necessary concomitant of beauty, and these people are healthier than the aristocracy."

Mauleverer. I do not agree at all with that statement, about health being a necessary concomitant of beauty.

Ellesmere. Nor I; but it was an important one for him. You know how he is always raging against the modes of life, and the habits, of what we call society. In some future essay, or discourse, he will be sure to maintain, that the aristocracy are naturally more beautiful than these people we have seen to-day; but that their beauty is damaged by injudicious modes of life. And

then he will appeal to us, and claim us as witnesses on his side, remembering this day's proceedings. Oh, I know him well! It was not without some such intention that he gave himself the immense trouble and fatigue, that it must have been to him, to perform the part of showman to-day.

I must confess that I think Sir John is right; and that we are sure to hear some reference to this day's proceedings at a future time.

In the course of the same day, after our return home, Mr. Cranmer suddenly made the following observations having reference to this day's proceeding.

Cranmer. Then you don't believe in birth, Milverton?

Milverton. There is hardly anything in which my belief is so firm, and so strong. A man must be very devoid of observation who does not believe in what you call birth.

Sir Arthur. I know a man of Eastern descent—remote Eastern descent—but you can trace in him many ancestral qualities derived from the East. He is always cold: he has a Brahminical tenderness for

insects. All his ways, his habits, and his modes of life smack of the East.

Ellesmere. This is fanciful.

Milverton. But I will tell you what is not fanciful, Ellesmere. Observe those people who are of French descent; whose forefathers were driven over here by the Edict of Nantes, or by the French Revolution. You can trace them by their French names. Almost all of those whom I have known are restless, lively, brilliant persons. Their French descent has not yet been counteracted by their English intermarriages. A similar statement may be made of those who are of Dutch origin.

People are so apt to confuse birth with rank. I do not expect the descendants of a peer made in George III.'s reign, to be especially brilliant personages.

We, the British nation, owe everything to birth; and particularly to the intermixture of races. It is the fact upon which I rest the continuance of our greatness. Our aristocracy is wise enough often to intermarry out of its own class.

But I will go still farther than that. In all classes this intermixture of races goes on perpetually. The somewhat stolid, sober-minded Englishman marries an Irish or a Scotch woman; and so the next generation has something in it of the brilliant nature of the Irish, or the perfervid nature of the Scotch.

Why is it that so many families in which there has

appeared a man of genius, have become extinct? I believe it is because the brain of the family, so to speak, has been too much worked. If these men would but have married peasant-girls, we should have had a continuance, in a mitigated form, of the genius—at any rate, we might have had a continuance of the family.

Modern researches into animal and insect life entirely go to prove my assertion. It is found that the grandchild of the insect partakes the nature of the grandfather insect. And something of the same kind is to be seen in our species.

Hence it is—I mean from all the considerations that we have been discussing, not from the last one merely—that I think the middle-class of our community to be so important to the well-being of the State.

Sir Arthur. I don't see what you mean.

Milverton. I mean this. There will be sure to be a large intermixture of races in this class; and if they retain sufficient political power, all will go right for the State.

Ellesmere. Whig doctrine!

Milverton. I do not care what you call it, but you will find it to be the true doctrine.

Now I will tell you what my fear is for these Islands. It is lest riches should be absorbed by one class, and that the wage-receiving class should become incomparably the most numerous. In fact, that both the highest and the lowest class should gain considerable

numbers at the expense of that middle-class, which I believe to be the one capable of resistance to all the folly that may come from the two other classes.

Cranmer. Why should this middle-class be diminished in power or in numbers?

Milverton. My dear Cranmer, don't you see that trade is becoming absorbed by the great capitalists? Don't you see that agriculture is becoming absorbed by the great agriculturists, who, of course, are also great capitalists? And then, don't you perceive that, day by day, there are fewer people who have what is called a stake in the country? It is a curious thing, but a very lamentable thing, that the wage-receiving portion of the middle-class, however large their wages may be, feel themselves to be dissociated from the class of capitalists. You may observe this even in professional men. The classes which rely upon intellectual or handicraft labour have mighty little sympathy with the class that relies upon accumulated capital for its power and its influence. And the danger that is imminent for the State—perhaps not in our days, but in future days—is, lest these two classes should come into fatal collision—that, in a word, brains and manual labour should combine against the capitalist and the possessor of land. This will be the greatest battle that will ever have been seen.

I am very anxious for the entire abolition of the Income Tax, and chiefly for this reason, that it is likely to be a battle-ground for these three classes. You know

it is an immensely provoking thing to the professional man, and to the wage-receiving man, that he should be placed upon an equality, as regards taxation, with the man who is living upon realised property. We are enduring this at present, for we are a forbearing people; but, in any times of trouble and excitement, it would be a fearful subject for agitation.

Now, as regards the theological questions which are rife in the present day, they are very troublesome, but they will not, as I have said before, produce any political disturbance. All classes are about equally interested in them. The danger to the well-being of a State is when different classes are unequally interested in the peaceable settlement of great questions. And I hold that the great danger to our State is the gradual detraction from the power and influence of the middle-classes.

My only objection to this co-operative movement, is that, again, by co-operation, you tend to produce a great capitalist in contradistinction to a number of small capitalists.

Cranmer. Then, Milverton, you would like to have many small agricultural holdings?

Milverton. Yes, I should: I admit that agricultural produce may be more certainly attained by large holdings. That is, it may in the first instance. Drainage, deep-ploughing, and other essentials for agriculture, often require large means. These necessary things may have to be effected by large capitalists; but, afterwards

the large capitalist would often do wisely, as it seems to me, in permitting small holdings. If we wish for the stability of a State, we must try and get as many persons interested in that stability as we possibly can, and so increase the numbers of that middle-class as regards which I maintain that it is, and ought to be, the most stable portion of any community.

Now, mark this; and it is one of the greatest lessons of history: when great States have fallen, you may almost always trace that decadence to the gradual extinction of the middle-classes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE were walking about the gardens at Kew, when the following conversation took place. It is especially difficult, as I have often said, to report accurately what is said when people are walking and talking; but I have here made a great endeavour to do so, thinking that the subject treated to-day, though accidentally brought up and discussed without any preparation, is so important, that even these peripatetic remarks about it might be worth recording.

The conversation was at first purely botanical, if indeed botanical it could be called, when none of the company were botanists. Sir John Ellesmere, with that powerful habit of familiarity which he possesses, had made himself acquainted with

some of the principal people employed in the management of those gardens, and he was quite in his element acting as cicerone to the rest of the party.

Ellesmere. You see this little insignificant-looking plant. We have made thousands, and I believe tens of thousands of pounds, by cultivating it and sending slips of it, or layers of it (I am sure I don't know whether I use the right word), out to India and to our colonies.

Milverton. By the way, is it not a fact worth noticing, that the most important plants in the world are so insignificant in appearance? Now look at this tea-plant! Who would have thought from its personal appearance that it would be about the most important plant in the world?

Then look at this rough weedy-looking thing, the tobacco-plant—who would have thought that that was the plant that would gladden the hearts of Chancellors of the Exchequer all over the world? for there has been less complaint about the taxes upon tobacco than about almost any other taxes.

Cranmer. Really it was a very beautiful thought—a thought of high civilization—that led great nations to bring together the plants, trees, and herbs of all climes. How much grander and more useful a thing it is than bringing together the animals of all climes. I don't like

going to the Zoological Gardens, because I feel how unhappy most of the poor animals must be. Those wretched monkeys, for instance, the victims of consumption in our changeful atmosphere; but we can manage to make this foreign vegetation thrive. When we were in the palm-house, it seemed to me as if its occupants were very contented with their present position, and were very much obliged to Dr. Hooker for placing them there. What a grand idea it gave one of a jungle!

Sir Arthur. Seeing all these plants and trees, chiefly brought from our colonies, puts me in mind of something I have long wished to put before you, Milverton.

You have given us many of your views about government at home; and, during this Easter, you have told us what you would do respecting sanitary affairs, and for the improvement of great towns. But I should like to hear what you would say about colonial administration. You may remember that, for a few months, I was once Under-Secretary for the Colonies; and their fortunes have ever since been very dear to me, and very pressing upon my mind.

Milverton. My dear Sir Arthur, you seem to forget, which is not very complimentary, that I have written a great deal about our colonies, and I have really nothing new to say upon the subject.

Ellesmere. Well, re-say it then. An author always seems to think that one has all his lucubrations fully before one at any given period. Whatever offence it

may evoke in the author's mind, I must honestly confess that I do not remember a single thought that Milverton has given us about the colonies. I suppose he told us that they were to be good boys, and that we were to be good fathers and mothers to them.

Milverton. I think I said a little more than that. But now I will repeat, as far as I can recollect it, what I did say, or, at any rate, what I now think.

To begin with, very few of us have anything like accurate knowledge of the relation which the colonies bear towards us. This relation is very different in different cases. Some of our colonies are as nearly as possible self-supporting, self-administering, practically almost independent. Others, on the contrary, are, comparatively speaking, in an infant and dependent position towards us. Others, again, are in a medium state, half-dependent, half-independent. You may imagine how different must be the modes of dealing with these various colonies by the Colonial Office.

I have always thought, contrary to the opinions of many people, that colonies are an enormous advantage to the nation, an absolutely unspeakable advantage. It seems to me such a great thing to have, in the most distant parts of the earth, large and powerful communities, speaking the same language as ourselves, having the same primitive ideas—I mean looking at things substantially in the same way that we do, and yet having a different climate, different products of the earth,

and even different modes of legislation and government, by all which similitudes and diversities we can profit, more than other nations, who have not established colonies.

We sought at first, in a vulgar and self-seeking way, by prohibitive duties, to grant especial encouragement to our colonies, and, at the same time, to make them more closely bound up with us; while, for ourselves, we hoped to gain peculiar advantages from this restriction of commerce. The first motive was the strongest one, namely, the hope of benefiting our colonies by these duties. Our colonial brethren might, in gratitude, sometimes remember this.

But it was a vicious system; and free trade has suppressed it. The main error that we have committed, as it seems to me, and which we still continue to commit, is that we have not sufficiently associated the colonies with the Imperial government. The fountains of honour should have been as freely open to them as to ourselves. Not only by doing that, which may appear a much smaller thing than it really is, but in every way that we could devise, we should have associated the leading men amongst them with our leading men. There should have been colonial peers, and colonial privy councillors. The wonderful increase in our time of rapidity of locomotion favours this view; and I do not believe that any other device would serve so well to attach the colonies to us. The time may come when we may greatly desire the existence of such an attachment.

The governor of an almost independent colony is now in a very isolated position, and cannot do half the good that he would be enabled to do, if he could, occasionally, have assistance in the councils at home from men who have distinguished themselves in the colonies, and are versed in questions of colonial administration, which are foreign to the knowledge of most persons.

We have pursued a wiser course with India; and there is, no doubt, great advantage derived from the Indian Council.

I admit that the cases are different; but something, not altogether dissimilar from the course we pursue as regards the government of India, might be adopted with regard, at any rate, to some of our colonies.

The great difficulty and the constant stumbling-block of offence between ourselves and our colonies is, as might be expected, the question of finance. Up to a certain time, we have taken upon ourselves, wholly or partially, the defence of a colony. Then comes the nice question of gradually withdrawing the means for defence; and practically informing the colony that it must, on all ordinary occasions, take care of itself.

A similar question has arisen as regards the civil administration of the colony; and, herein, the question of gradual withdrawal has been even more complicated, and has required still more delicate handling. In all such matters I should venture to say

that, upon high Imperial considerations, our conduct should lean rather to generosity than to parsimony. Doubtless, this would appear very wild doctrine to those persons who start with the idea that colonies are not very serviceable to the mother-country; and that, in times of war, they may be a very dangerous possession. But those people should be made aware that we have gone too far, with safety and honour, to retract. It is no use saying, that colonies should, in time of war, take care of themselves. The voice of the people would pronounce distinctly against that doctrine; and, on any great occasion, the voices of a few political economists would meet with no response.

Looking at the whole matter practically, I feel certain that we are committed, as it were, to the support of our colonies both in the case of danger from the foreigner, and in the case of great domestic danger or disturbance. Our policy, therefore, should be, by every means in our power to keep up the strictest possible union with the colonies, so that we might avail ourselves of the attachment of each and all of them, for the aid and protection of any one which might be, for the moment, in danger.

I come now to a much smaller matter, which, nevertheless, has great influence in times of peace. Of course you will say that I am speaking as an author; but it is a matter which much concerns the highest cultivation of the world, that there should be good laws, regulating

copyright throughout all those countries in which the inhabitants speak the same language. You can hardly imagine what a benefit this would be to the higher branches of literature, of science, and of art. And this object would be greatly promoted by that interchange of thoughtful administration, which would be produced by our having amongst us persons in high and responsible positions who had been, or still were, eminent persons in the colonies.

There are many other matters of larger moment in which the interests both of the colonies and of the mother-country would be greatly served by this interchange of thought, and by the presence here, if only occasionally, of the great men of the colonies.

To my mind, there has never been any people who understood the management of colonies and of provinces so well as did the Romans in their best times. We cannot, at this long interval, and with the scanty records that we have of Roman thought upon this subject, lay down exactly what were the principles which actuated them. But enough remains to show that they understood the art of making the colonists, and the provincials, feel that they were united by strict bonds to the mother-country, and that a provincial or a colonist should be in every respect a *civis Romanis.*

Ellesmere. Sero medicina paratur. The dose has been dilatory: it comes, I fear, too late. You should have commenced this system long ago.

Cranmer. I don't think it is too late.

Ellesmere. Are you not, sir, an official man, or, at some time of your life, have you not been in office? Does delay ever make any official man acknowledge that a remedy can come too late? Go down from the witness-box: you are a discredited witness.

Sir Arthur. This gives me a fair opportunity of saying what I have long wished to say in Ellesmere's presence, but thought it would be rude to do so; and that is, as to the general treatment of witnesses by counsel. If a man has the misfortune to see or hear of any transaction which is brought into court, he is really liable to undergo *peine forte et dure* in that abode of misery, the "witness-box." Most men of a certain age have committed some folly, met with some misfortune, or have done or said something which it is exceedingly unpleasant for them to recount again. Even women may not, during all their lives, have acted wisely; and, in fact, there remain no unterrifiable witnesses but children.

Suppose it were a case of the collision of carriages, and some statesman who happened to be passing by at the time of the collision were examined as a witness, the cross-examination might run thus. "Did you not, sir, in the year 18—, vow and declare that if there was anything in this world you admired, anything to which you were ready to bow, it was the English Church? And did you not, in the year 18—, say all you could to injure that Church?"

The wretched statesman would then begin to explain, how he did not exactly say what the counsel makes him to have said, either on the first or the second occasion; and by repeated cross-examination he would be made to appear a mass of bewildered inconsistency.

Then the counsel breaks forth with becoming indignation. "It does not seem, sir, that you have ever known on which side you were, or on which side any body else was; and yet you are perfectly certain that the defendant's carriage was on the near side of the road, when the plaintiff's carriage dashed up against it."

Ellesmere. This is farcical.

Milverton. Not a bit more than many cross-examinations I have read. What does it signify to the case whether a witness has "lived happily with his wife?" Yet that is the sort of thing which you lawyers bring up.

Ellesmere. We must attend to what is in our briefs; and surely the character of a witness is an important point, as regards his credibility?

Sir Arthur. Yes, but it should only be the character *ad hoc.* Your cross-examination has no right to travel into all the circumstances of a man's life, which cannot, except by a great stretch of fancy, be made to apply to the bearings of the case.

Milverton. It remains for jurymen and judges to put this evil down; and it is not one of the least important of their functions.

Cranmer. Meanwhile, since we have been enlarging

upon the iniquities of lawyers, we have lost sight of our colonial friends.

Ellesmere. The truth is, we (at any rate I speak for myself) have not sufficient knowledge to talk upon the subject. Milverton's sayings seemed to me plausible enough. I can well imagine that we have never taken enough pains to make our colonies in unison with ourselves. But you know, there is a touch of the parish vestry even in the greatest assemblies of mankind; and our own Parliament is not devoid of this parish vestry element. The parish pump will interest it more than any affair in a distant colony, especially if, in that affair, several names, difficult to pronounce, occur. It is for statesmen to have forethought in these matters, not for ordinary members of Parliament.

No more was said about colonies or colonial administration, and we proceeded in our walk through the garden.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR next conversation began after a game of croquet. I do not play myself: it seems a very poor kind of game —at least it does to a Scotchman accustomed to play golf; but it amuses these Southerners very much, I can see.

As for my chief, he would play any game whatever with earnestness and vivacity. I believe he would throw some spirit and some hope into "Beggar my Neighbour." He evidently looks upon games as a good means of interrupting thought, and as the surest mode of recreation.

In a game of croquet, Sir John and Lady Ellesmere always play on one side; Mr. Milverton and Mr. Cranmer on the other. Sir John and his partner are greatly

the better players; but the other side sometimes steal a victory, if they can make Sir John and my Lady dispute with one another about the strokes, and so become a little nervous and disjointed in their play.

When we were in the library, the conversation began thus:—

Milverton. There is a great deal to be learnt from games; but perhaps the greatest lesson is, that one always does a thing better, the more indifferent one is as to the doing of it. Now, if one could but learn that lesson in the larger game of life, how useful it would be. I have observed that a man is hardly ever so successful as when he does not care at all about succeeding.

I was once at an archery meeting. At a pause in the contest they jokingly asked me to take a shot, wishing probably to get some amusement from the clumsy attempt of an awkward and inexperienced man. I was quite willing to afford this amusement. I remember that I gave a good look at the gold, and then at once shot right into the centre of it. They asked me to join in the game, but I wisely declined. I heard that new and somewhat vulgar word so often in Ellesmere's mouth, "fluke," muttered by some of the bystanders. Now it was not a fluke. It was, that the eye and the hand, not

being embarrassed or controlled by any nervous care, did their duty properly and exactly. Some time afterwards, I did try to find what skill I had with those implements, for which Dugald Dalgetty had such a contempt, bows and arrows. I found it was a wonderful event if I hit the target at all; but then you see I tried hard to hit it. How, too, when we especially wish to please, we mostly fail!

There are some defects of mind which seem to be almost incurable; the shy man remains shy to the end of the chapter, however much you may accustom him to society and to being brought prominently before the world. Well then, as regards public speaking, even such men as the late Lord Derby and the late Sir Robert Peel never succeeded in conquering the nervous timidity which they felt in having to speak on any great occasion This kind of nervousness is, I believe, unconquerable.

Sir Arthur. What then *is* conquerable? What does one learn by experience?

Milverton. Ah! that is the question of questions. I suppose one is sent here to gain experience.

Mauleverer. One finds out what a fool one is, and what fools other people are.

Ellesmere. What a good subject this would make for an essay! You might call it "Looking back upon Life." Milverton shall write the essay, and the rest of us shall be severe critics. We are not very aged,

any of us; but every one of us was brought very early into what is called "Life," and so we ought to have learned some experience. When I say every one of us, of course I except the ladies; but then you know they begin life so early, so much earlier than we do. A maiden of seventeen being at least equal to a man of forty in nice and critical observation of all that is brought before her, we may fairly say that, whenever the ladies are our inferiors in age, they are our superiors in experience. I flatter myself, Lady Ellesmere, that this is a noble revenge I am taking for your ill-natured comments upon my play at croquet this morning, which made me nervous and caused us to lose the game to those wretched players. I saw through the cunning of that man [pointing to Mr. Milverton], who did everything he could to sow dissension between us—now siding with you, and now with me—in the hope of confusing us, and so winning a victory for his side. How contemptible are the arts of diplomatists and official men!

Sir Arthur. Ellesmere's idea, Milverton, is a very good one. He has given you an excellent subject for an essay, and it will be the last one we shall have this year, for we must go up to town on Monday, therefore by next Saturday you must have this essay ready.

Milverton. It is scant time to allow me for the treatment of such a serious subject; but I will do my best.

Thus it was agreed that Mr. Milverton

should write this essay; and, until Saturday morning, he and I were busily engaged in our work. When the day came we were ready; and, without any previous talk, Mr. Milverton read as follows:—

LOOKING BACK UPON LIFE.

In considering this vast subject, it is almost needless to premise that it does not admit of being treated with anything like defined certainty. The very different standpoints, from which different individuals will look back upon life, must make their conclusions very dissimilar. Still, there are some general results which may be set down as matters of comparative certainty.

It is as if, with our present imperfect knowledge, we were to undertake to make a map of Africa. Nevertheless, there are certain great outlines which may be taken to be determined.

Roughly we may divide this subject into three heads: namely, what we find,

in looking back upon life, of change of view as regards ourselves—as regards our fellow-men—and as regards the world in general.

First, with regard to ourselves. Perhaps the most remarkable change that, on this retrospection, we discover in ourselves, is, that we have begun to find out the truth of the tritest sayings: of sayings, indeed, which were little more than so many well-disposed and well-connected words to us at our outset in life. They were words which we supposed to have some truth and meaning in them, because they seemed to have been accepted in all ages and by all peoples. No doubt, we thought, they concern other persons; and, in truth, they were even then accepted by us from a kind of polite conformity.

Proverbs, which once we thought were of a certain respectable character—proverbs which we were ready to admit justly found a place in all good collections of proverbs—have ceased to become merely respect-

able, and, perhaps, have become almost dreadful by reason of their close application to ourselves, and our own past conduct.

Of the virtues, that one which some of us had most despised, or, at any rate, had supposed to be a mean, poor, and middle-aged virtue, quite unequal to deal with the great occasions of life, has probably become the one of which, from experience, we could now speak most highly. We have found, to our cost, that Prudence is indeed the mother of all the virtues.

One of the things that must strike a thoughtful man very forcibly when he looks back upon life, is the immense power given to the individual—a power to injure himself to any extent—to injure or oppress his fellow-men to a fearful extent—and, not less, to injure and oppress the rest of the animal creation. This is, perhaps, the most astonishing phenomenon in the world, viz., the apparently limitless extent, for evil, of the power of an individual.

Again, in looking back upon life, most thoughtful men will recollect how great a mystery and perplexity the system of the world has been to them. With some men, and not by any means the least thoughtful, this terrible enigma increases in difficulty. It continues to sadden them, and numb their efforts, to the end of their lives. With others, who certainly may claim to be the more practical men, the burden of this difficulty is at some period of their lives resolutely put aside; and they set to work to do what they can to render life smoother for themselves and their fellow-men, regardless of the vast chaotic difficulties and incomprehensibilities, which at one time had pervaded all their thoughts, and had tended greatly to deaden their activity.

In looking back upon life, a man will recognize to which of these two great sections of mankind he has belonged.

In this retrospect, it is well to see to what injurious things one becomes accustomed. I believe that most men

will find, upon self-examination, that they have become, to a certain extent, used to contumely, abuse, and calumny—but not to misrepresentation. If this statement be true, it tells well for human nature. It is the untruthfulness of misrepresentation that vexes men so much. The basis of this feeling is the same as that which prompted the celebrated words, "Strike, but hear me." The misrepresented man says, "Call me knave, coward, fool; but tell the story truly upon which you found these injurious accusations."

Ingratitude is a hard thing to bear; but men become much more easily accustomed to bear even that, than to endure misrepresentation. The probability that my statement is true, is shown by the answer often given to the perplexing question, "Would you rather be condemned upon a true accusation than upon a false one?" From the answers to this inquiry, you will find that most men are ready to accept the strange conclusion, that they could

better bear when guilty, than when innocent, to suffer condemnation.

When we indulge in a retrospective mood, do we find that the great passions or affections of the mind—such as Hope, Fear, Love, and the like—have lost their sway? Certainly not, I would maintain, as regards those persons who possess natures of much pith and force. With such men, the objects of these passions may be changed; are, indeed, in some respects, certain to be changed; but not the depth and vitality of the passions themselves. For example, the young man mostly begins with a large and vivid hope of what he is to do by his own efforts. If he is a man of benevolent tendency, he is to effect much in the regeneration of mankind. Experience teaches him how little he can do; but his hopefulness will not be entirely fooled, and soon comes to fix itself upon the general advance of mankind in civilization—an advance which he now perceives is to be attained by innumerable individual

efforts. In fine, the hope changes its form, but not its substance.

His fears, if they do not take a similar course, are not, at any rate, less potent than they were in early life; and, if he is naturally of a timid disposition, those fears deepen and darken as age advances.

With regard to love, that passion of course changes somewhat of its character, and one form of it may die out altogether; but its essential nature is unchanged, and perhaps unchangeable. Indeed, there is no affection of the human soul which, probably, as age advances, gains more in extent, variety, and versatility. The hindrances which sometimes in youth confine that affection within narrow bounds, such as intolerance, largeness of expectation, are gradually removed by the experience of life, and therefore the affection, nay, I would say the passion, itself has only a wider and a deeper sway as age advances.

Even the lesser affections of the soul are not dwarfed or diminished by increase

of years—as, for instance, the capacity for enjoyment. The immortal soul does not grow old in seventy years. Often it feels itself to be younger. And why? Because it thinks less about itself, is less perplexed about its own doings, is less weakly sensitive, and therefore has wider sympathies, and enters more heartily into the enjoyments partaken by its fellows. Unless hindered by physical circumstances, such as ill-health, loss of hearing, or loss of sight, the capacity for social enjoyment, with many persons, goes on steadily increasing.

There is another reason for this advance in the capability of enjoyment, besides the one already given. It is that criticism becomes more indulgent, fastidiousness less prevalent; and the youth who began by proneness to blame and censure, and by disappointment at the feebleness of all human efforts (including their attempts at pleasure as well as their attempts at managing the serious affairs of life) ends perhaps

by being somewhat astonished at the success which, with all their shortcomings, men have attained in Art, Science, and even in the Pleasures of life—their most common source of failure. Finding how little he himself has been able to accomplish in any of these directions, he begins to look with some respect, and much wonder, at what mankind, taken as a whole, have after all accomplished.

Ellesmere. Do let me interrupt for a moment, just for the sake of giving Milverton some breathing time. I am going to agree with him, so there will be no discussion. Let us all pray that, if we commit any crime, it may be our good fortune to have in the jury that tries us a fair number of elderly men. I assure you, that in the two or three great criminal cases I have been engaged in, as counsel for the prisoner, the first thing on entering the Court that I have done, is to look at the jury to see if there was a handsome sprinkling of middle-aged or elderly men amongst them. Now go on, Milverton.

Milverton. Your interruption, Ellesmere, was not as inconvenient as usual, for I was going to commence dealing with the second division of my subject, and I will do so now.

In looking back upon life, I suppose that most of us will find that we have come to form a very different estimate of human character from that with which we began. I do not know of anything which more fascinates youth than what, for want of a better word, we may call brilliancy. Gradually, however, this peculiar kind of estimation changes very much. It is no longer those who are brilliant, those who affect to do the most and the best work with the least apparent pains and trouble, whom we are most inclined to admire. We eventually come to admire labour, and to respect it the more, the more openly it is proclaimed by the laborious man to be the cause of his success, if he has any success to boast of.

Again, there is a certain form of character which, at the outset of life, has little or no attraction for us, and which, to say the honest truth, we think is rather slow.

I allude to that peculiarly felicitous

character which displays a certain proportion of aims, ends, and even of affections. Every year that we live makes us perceive more the beauty of such a character, and increases the influence which it silently acquires over us.

Again, we no longer think that eloquence is the first of human gifts. Mere wit and sarcasm also lose some of their hold upon us; and even among the most commonplace people you will observe that, as life advances, the appreciation of sound argument is more and more developed. They have found that the transactions in this world are very serious things; and they want to know whether anybody can tell them anything which will make the world go on better. This statement must not be held to contradict what has been said about the capacity for enjoyment not diminishing as age advances. As our years go on, we do not the less delight in listening to eloquence, or less appreciate wit and humour. But, secretly, we come to consider all these things

as mere adjuncts, and only as very pretty fringe to the real stuff of the questions at issue. And, as our time on earth shortens, we are more and more anxious to get, if possible, at the real substance of everything brought under our consideration.

There is another very general and very important conclusion which most men will find that they have arrived at in looking back upon life. It is, that their fellow-men are much better fellows than from history and biography they appear to have been, or, from our first impressions, they appear to be. The study of history is, no doubt, a most valuable and needful one. But this fact ought always to be in the mind of the student—namely, that history chiefly deals with the outbreaks of folly, ambition, and passion, which have been so frequent among mankind. Taken by itself, it gives a very unfair view of human life. A similar conclusion is to be arrived at with regard to the writings of cynical philosophers. A young man reads his

Rochefoucauld, or his Swift, or his Rabelais, or certain modern writers whom I could mention, and is apt to think that these cynical philosophers give a just view of human life. In his own talk, he shows that he thinks it to be a fine thing, and a just thing, to imitate their sayings. But all this is mightily changed as he advances in life; and, in looking back, he is nearly sure to become aware of this change. He is more likely, then, to agree with the views of a certain defunct Prime Minister, which I believe I have imparted to you before, my brethren in council. A Prime Minister now living, on entering into his high office, asked one of his eminent predecessors what his experience of mankind had led him to conclude about them. The reply was to this effect, and nearly, I believe, in these words: "Oh! they are capital fellows—much better fellows than you would imagine; but deuced vain, you know—deuced vain!"

There alone it will probably be found, that the most cynical writers have not

exaggerated when they have touched upon this, the principal failing of mankind—its vanity.

In looking back upon life, one may perceive what changes life has brought upon oneself; also what different views one has learnt to take of other men, considered as individuals. There still remains, however, a very important observation to be made which concerns men not viewed as individuals, but as units in a very complicated social system. This part of experience, if it is ever attained, is of the utmost value. For instance, suppose you wish to persuade a number of men to take a given course. You may have persuaded each one of them separately; but still you cannot rely upon what they will do when they come to consult, or to act, together.

Moreover, even if they should, in council or in action, go entirely with you as a body, the outer world beyond them may prove a great hindrance to their doing what you wish, and what they wish, espe-

cially as regards the time of doing it. The result of all this complication, which increases almost in exact proportion with the increase of certain kinds of civilization, is sure to be immense delay—a delay for which the young, the ardent, and the inexperienced seldom make due allowance.

Probably the greatest disappointment in life is the finding out, as one does gradually, the enormous time, as it seems to us, that it takes to get anything done. Almost every form of organization goes wrong at first, from the organizer, if he be inexperienced, supposing that every person or body concerned will act at the right time, namely, the time that he has set down for their action. The great skill of great commanders will often be found to consist in a keen appreciation of the difficulty of getting the right thing done at the right time. Sufficient allowance is hardly ever made for such a simple matter as illness—the illness of your agents or other subordinates. And yet even in the

arrangements for pleasure, experience shows us how many defaulters there will be from illness, when any considerable number of persons are to be brought together. Moreover, you have to allow for the unpunctuality, the laziness, and the disobedience of mankind.

The final result is, that, in looking back upon life, most men will have to own they have made some terrible miscalculations as to the length of time, or rather, want of speed, with which several of their principal objects in life have been attained.

Again, there are other very noticeable facts to be observed in the conduct of men, when they think or act in bodies. Infallibly there enters much exaggeration. You may see this in the correction of any great abuse. The movement is seldom that which would merely suffice to correct the abuse; but it is a movement which very often carries the movers towards another abuse in the contrary direction. The pendulum is made to swing as much

in the opposite direction as it did in the one sought to be neutralized. You will not easily make bodies of men stop, when and where you want them to stop.

Another evil attendant upon the conduct of large bodies of men, is their sheepishness. This word is used in its largest signification, not as indicating timidity or shamefacedness, but as that most notable instinct of the ovine race to follow thoughtlessly and rushingly in whatever direction the bell-wether is pleased to lead them.

In the retrospect, therefore, of life, you will generally find that neither for this exaggeration, nor for this sheepishness, have you made sufficient allowance.

Another error which, in your juvenile days, did much prevail with you, was the belief that other men, especially large bodies of men, would act in conformity with the dictates of right reason; whereas those disturbing elements—feeling, prejudice, fancy—play an immense part in human affairs. This puzzles pedants; and we all begin by

being pedants, pedantry being a peculiar attribute of the young.

Again, in looking back upon life, you are nearly sure to perceive that you have, at one time or other, thrown the weight of your voice and opinion in behalf of one of two classes, from both of whom your maturer judgment would keep you clear. There is an intense love of an unreasoning conservatism in some human breasts. It is probably well that there should be this feeling, otherwise the framework of human society might soon go to pieces. There is also, in another class of minds, an intense love of destructiveness, or at least of change. Nothing is right with them, everything must be forthwith altered entirely. The wittiest of modern French writers has pictured the Conservatives as protesting against the innovation of creative force. "Mon Dieu! conservons le chaos," he has made them say. On the other hand, he might have made the destructives say, "Mon Dieu! revenons au chaos."

There can be little doubt that most reflective men, in considering their past lives, would confess that they have, at one time or other, belonged to the party of chaos—whether of the chaos to be retained by unreasonable preservation, or of that to be attained by irrational destruction.

We speak of the timidity of age; but, consistently with what has been said before, it may be argued that timidity has not so much increased as circumspection. What fiery old generals there have been, both in modern and ancient times, whose daring has equalled that of the youngest men in their armies!

There is one portion of experience, from which most men, in looking back upon life, derive some profit. They learn how difficult it is to make men understand anything thoroughly—for instance, how needful it is to repeat arguments, to bring them home to the hearer by various illustrations, and to retrace and restate the course of any argument from the beginning. In youth, when

you have stated anything, and the hearer assents, or appears to assent, you are easily satisfied as to his understanding what has been said. Experience, however, convinces you how rarely men give undivided attention to anything that is said to them; and you find out that the practice in which lawyers indulge, when addressing juries—namely, of repeating their arguments many times—is requisite not only in legal matters, but in any question of every-day life. In giving instructions, for example, to agents or inferiors, we learn by degrees that those instructions must be frequently repeated, and that we must be assured beforehand that they are thoroughly understood, if we wish them to be completely acted upon.

In careful retrospection, that element in human affairs which we call chance, seems to have played a great part in our affairs, and, indeed, to have had almost its own way with us. Most men will own that the main tenor of their lives has been at the mercy of the most trivial circumstances.

If they had not crossed the road at that particular moment, if this man had been at home when they called, if that man had not met them in the street, if they had been here, and not there, when such and such a thing happened—how different would have been their course in life, how altogether changed!

I have not cared to dwell upon any of the darker features of my subject — to describe the vain regrets, the sad longings, the direful remorses, which must come to most men in looking back upon life. My object has mainly been to show the changes of thought, opinion, and of conduct which any discreet man will be likely to perceive in himself, when entering upon the retrospection which I have imagined for him.

It is meant to be the retrospection of ordinary experience, and not of secret sorrow.

Ellesmere. This will be the third time, I believe, in the course of our sojourn here, that I have had to mention to you the ignominious fact that my intellectual

capacities are limited. Now, as regards speeches in Parliament, I have generally found, that even very able speeches contain no more than three or four arguments. Take away the padding, and there remain about four telling sentences to answer. Practical experience convinced me of the truth of this statement. Some man would be making a good speech which, from the first, I suspected I should have to answer, and so I endeavoured to make a careful analysis of it, as it proceeded. Then, perhaps, would come a whisper from the Prime Minister, or a little note from him, commanding me to reply—which command of course I obeyed.

In looking over my adversary's speech next morning, I rarely found that I had understated the number of his arguments. I don't pretend to say that I gave good answers to all of them. He might have had the better case. My point is to show you the smallness of the number. Now, in listening to such an essay as this, you cannot reduce the number of arguments, or at least statements, to anything like the number four. There was Milverton with his "Again, and again, and again," until one hardly knew where one was.

Briefly, it is a fine day, let us disperse ourselves; and I, for one, must have the written essay lent to me if I am to say anything about it worth hearing.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE other "Friends" also took the essay away with them; and, I believe, each of them read it over separately. Mr. Milverton and I were therefore prepared for a great deal of hostile criticism; and, in this respect, as the reader will see, we were not mistaken. He said to me, "You may be sure, Johnson, that what they will do, will be to point out the number of things I have *not* touched upon. Critics will hardly ever place themselves in the position of the person whom they criticise. It is in vain that he tells them, 'I am here, and not there.' They will insist upon looking at his work from 'there,' and not 'here.' Now you will see that some of them are sure to say, 'Why did you not

deal with the greater, the deeper parts of the subject?' which, as you know, I told them at the end of the essay I expressly avoided. I did not want to make them miserable during the last day or two of our meeting. Of course one could make any man miserable by writing a deplorable, tearful essay upon such a painful subject as looking back upon life. I meant, as you know, to show forth those common-sensible conclusions to which the retrospect of an active life (and they have most of them had active lives) might lead them. I don't mind telling you what I think to be the truest part of the essay; but it is very commonplace. It is what I said about delay. Now you are a young fellow. You could hardly profit more by the experience of other and older men, than by getting into your mind the length of time that it takes to get anything done. I assure you, it is only by dread experience that I have found out this, and have learnt at all to prepare for it."

In the course of the evening of that day, the "Friends" said that they were ready to discuss the essay, and the conversation thus began.

Sir Arthur. What pleased me most in the essay, is the part where Milverton maintained that the feelings of hope and fear, and even of love, remain as a constant quantity, or, at any rate, do not largely diminish. There is a little treatise of Jean Paul Richter's to the same effect—

"Ueber das Immergrün unſerer Gefühle."

Ellesmere. German again! [Said somewhat whisperingly.]

Sir Arthur. Now do not be so absurd, Ellesmere, as to affect to despise the greatest literature of modern times.*

Ellesmere. I don't despise it, Sir Arthur, but I think we could do without it sometimes. However, do not let us quarrel about German literature; but let us dissect the present essay. It appeared to me to have one

* Afterwards Sir Arthur read to us the following passage, from Jean Paul's essay:—

"Nur ein enges Herz wächſt nicht, aber ein weites wird größer: jenes verengen die Jahre, dieſes dehnen ſich aus."

"Ein andermal glaubt der Menſch ſich vom Alter erkältet, weil er in ihm blos für höhere Gegenſtände entbrennen kann, als ſolche, die ihn früher erwärmten."

prevailing fault, namely, that it contained the views of a thoughtful, questioning man; but not those of the world in general. Moreover, it had an air of business about it. For instance, all that he said about delay was just the kind of thing which a shrewd attorney would find out, and would comment upon, in looking back upon life, but was not what the ordinary man would discover. Now you have alluded to the "ever-green" of feelings, to use Jean Paul's phrase; but do you mean to tell me that there is this "ever-green" as regards the exercise of the intellectual faculties? On the contrary, do you not find that most men cease to exercise those faculties in any new direction, and that they seem to be contented with the knowledge they have acquired in early days? Of course I shall hear about Cato's having begun to learn Greek at eighty.

Milverton. Let me answer him. I contend that the ordinary mind does not become less active, but it has sufficient food to act upon. It is perpetually testing by experience all that goes on around it, and this affords sufficient exercise for it. Doubtless, the more vigorous minds learn new languages, pursue fresh studies, and are always gaining knowledge.

Cranmer. Don't you think he was right, Ellesmere, when he said that, in looking back upon life, one finds that one has gradually made a very different estimate, as regards human character, from that which one began by making—how one comes to admire those characters

which in youth one thought little of? I thoroughly agreed with all that part of the essay.

Ellesmere. Yes, no doubt Cranmer admires more and more the Blue-Book element in human nature—the solid, proportionate man, as compared with the brilliant, irregular genius.

Mauleverer. Now I think that the greatest oversight in the essay was this—that the essayist did not tell us that, in looking back on life, one did not notice how little either one's self, or anybody else whom one knew well, has really changed in character. There is a certain film of varnish which covers over the man's manners, and all that he is pleased to show of his character, but the underlying substance is the same.

Sir Arthur. That is nearly the greatest scandal that can be uttered against human nature, and goes far to deny what I believe to be the main purpose of human life. It is a commonplace saying, and one that I rather wonder that such a man as Mauleverer should have counter-signed. An important part of the essay was directed against this pernicious view. Did not Milverton show you, and even Ellesmere agreed with him, that we become incomparably more tolerant as we advance in life? But I should have gone much farther. Do you mean to tell me that selfishness is not largely subdued as we grow older? Even the faults of temper are considerably modified; and, in fact, there is often a radical change in the whole character

of the man. Otherwise what would be the good of living?

Ellesmere. I suppose, then, that avarice becomes less and less predominant.

Milverton. I do not mind that sneer at all. After all, avarice is not so much a passion as an occupation, and that is why it gains upon men as they grow older. I admit that most men fear to take up anything new. It is a great mistake; but they certainly are apt to believe, that they have no longer the capacity for new work. And, then, that which is the besetting fault of human nature, its indolence, confirms them in this view; and so they go on increasingly devoting themselves to their old occupations. That is how I account for the predominance of avarice, if it is predominant, as we advance in life.

Mauleverer. I have been unlucky, it appears, in the objection I have taken. I shall be more fortunate, I suppose, when I indicate my agreement with another part of the essay. I did think that Milverton was right in what he said about our discovering that men, when acting in masses, were prone to indulge in much exaggeration. You never can over-estimate the absurdity of mankind when they are collected together. Folly is a contagious or infectious disease; but wisdom is by no means catching; and the abode of truth is most judiciously placed at the bottom of a very deep well.

Ellesmere. I am going to make a remark which ought to meet with general approval; but I suppose it won't, owing to the captiousness of philosophers. I maintain that the thing which we call temperament does not alter. The sanguine man remains sanguine still, the desponding man desponding still; and to bring my statement close home, I declare that I cannot see any change in the temperaments of my learned friends who surround me.

Milverton. I am by no means prepared to admit that statement, at any rate without much qualification. I admit that the first impulses given by temperament, are very similar throughout a man's life.

Ellesmere. Then, so far, you are with me.

Milverton. But I maintain that these impulses are greatly modified and checked by experience. You do not perceive this so much in men's talk, as in their action. The sanguine man, for example, when a subject is brought before him in conversation, is apt to show that his temperament is still very sanguine; but, give him the time which is requisite for action, and he will generally show you that other elements have entered into his composition, which go far to control his naturally sanguine temperament.

Sir Arthur. I do not wish to be captious, Milverton, but I must say I think there was some truth in what Ellesmere said in an early period in our conversation, when he remarked that there was an air of business

about the essay. You seemed to me studiously to avoid some of the deeper parts of the subject.

Milverton. Specify.

Sir Arthur. You did not say, whether, on looking back upon life the retrospect of sorrow diminished or increased sorrowfulness, and whether the retrospect of joy contained much or little joyfulness.

Milverton. I think that the retrospect of sorrow is, with most persons, not very sorrowful. They see that sorrow is the great improver, the great chastener. I think that the retrospect of joy is still, with most persons, full of joyfulness. I hold the views of Horace as interpreted by those splendid lines of Dryden, which I have often quoted to you as a rare instance of a translation exceeding in force and beauty the original.

Cranmer. I don't remember them.

Milverton.

> "Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
> The joys I have possessed, in spite of fate, are mine.
> Not Jove, himself, upon the past has power,
> But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour."

By the way, I think Dryden the greatest writer of English we have ever had.

Sir Arthur. I am inclined to agree with you.

Milverton. But I have something to say to you touching the general subject, which I think will be new to you, and which will account to you for my not having touched upon what you call the deeper parts of the subject.

I think that in considering all these matters, and many other matters too, the question of memory plays a large part. I begin by asserting, contrary to the opinion of the world, that all great people have great memories. Such at least has been my experience. Without any exception, all the eminent statesmen I have worked with and under, have possessed powers of memory far superior to those of the average of mankind. I cannot see how it can be otherwise. A good memory, as I take it, is the result of the impression made at the time by any incident affecting the remembering person. The principal difference between men of much faculty and ordinary men is, that the former are more impressible and give more profound attention to all they see or hear. Attention is, in my belief, the main part of genius.

Sir Arthur. So far I am with you.

Milverton. I proceed to show you how this power of memory acts upon the moral qualities. Mark you, it is by no means altogether a blessing. It forms the basis of all revengeful feelings. It is easy for the man of a loose, careless, unholding memory, to forgive: it is very difficult for a person of steadfast memory to forgive. I quite understand the saying of Queen Elizabeth to the Countess of Nottingham, "God may forgive you: I cannot." Elizabeth had a very potent memory. To such persons the original injury comes back, years after, with the freshness of feeling as on the day upon which it was endured; while, to the persons of poor

memory, the original transaction comes back in a very blurred and indistinct manner.

Now the conduct of these two different sets of people must be very dissimilar.

After what I have said in favour of people who possess great memories, it may seem a boastful thing for me to say that I have a great memory, but it is a fact. Now, as we have said before several times in this conversation, let us bring the matter home. We will imagine, though it is a great stretch of imagination, that Ellesmere has said something very rude to me years ago, and that we approached to something like a quarrel. Of course nothing of the kind has ever happened, but we will imagine it. If the fact returns to the recollection of both of us, how different will be our feelings! With me the thing is as vivid as if it occurred yesterday. With Ellesmere the thing comes back in a very blurred and defective form; and he especially takes care to forget the sharpest parts of his rudest sayings. What immense merit there is in me if I continue to forgive, though I do not forget one tithe or tittle of the original offence!

Ellesmere. What a grand fellow he is making himself out to be! Not that he does forgive, for you must have observed there was an important "if" in the case.

Milverton. In all that I have hitherto said on the subject of memory, I was only preparing you for what I am going to say. I avoided what you call the deep parts of the subject, because I felt that in an essay I

could not sufficiently explain the views which I took upon those parts.

Now, in considering the effect of retrospection, as regards past joys or sorrows, you must see how much depends upon the vividness with which they recur to the remembering person.

Then comes in the question of temperament. The man of a joyful, sanguine temperament is again delighted with the joyful subjects of remembrance. The man of a morbid, self-condemning, others-condemning temperament, dwells upon the melancholy portions of his past life. And so the question, whether, in looking back upon life, joyful or sorrowful remembrance predominates, is complicated by these two disturbing elements of memory and temperament. Hence I feared to make any general statement on the subject, perceiving how likely it was to be erroneous, if all these refinements were not adequately considered. Have I justified myself?

Sir Arthur. I think you have; and I admit that I have never taken these two elements into consideration.

Milverton. It has always appeared to me, that in treating of moral subjects, those are the elements that have been most neglected. I am sure I do not know in what temperament consists. Great physiologists might be able to tell us something of the subject; but we unscientific persons cannot do so.

I was very much struck by some physiological experi-

ments which I read of some time ago, whereby it seemed to be proved, that sensations and impressions of all kinds were conveyed to the brain of one man much quicker than to that of another. We are apt to judge of character by what we suppose to be the essential attributes, such as, whether it is an ill-disposed, or well-disposed, an amiable or unamiable character; but we seldom consider the pace at which all the emotions of the mind proceed in different human beings.

Ellesmere. This is all too recondite for me, and the examples given are almost impossible ones for me to imagine. I never could have dared to be rude to Milverton, of whom I stand in so much awe, and therefore, with my poor powers of imagination and of memory, I cannot tell what would happen if an imaginary instance of rudeness on my part were to be brought to his recollection and to mine. You may all laugh; but your laughing does not endow me with accurate remembrance, or with the splendid powers of his imagination.

Hitherto what I have said has not been well received: but I am going to make an assertion now, which none of you can gainsay.

In looking back upon life you must admit that nearly everybody is discontented with his own avocation, whatever it may be. Now that would have been a fact well worth noting. You doubt it, do you? Why, each one of you has confessed to me his dissatisfaction with his own career.

Cranmer. That is not exactly the point, Ellesmere. You said with his "avocation," not with his "career."

Ellesmere. Right: I will take you one by one. Milverton thinks that his gift is the gift of speech: and that he ought to have been in the House of Commons. As he is a persuasive kind of fellow, and is versed in all the arts of compromise, I dare say he would have carried a bill through the House of Commons with considerable skill. I can hear him declaring that a clause composed by him would exactly meet the opposing views of all his opponents, whether friends or foes. But, good Heavens, how he would have mourned over his occupation! No time for thought: no time for writing: no time for acquiring knowledge. I am becoming, he would say, one of the most brutally ignorant men in the country.

Sir Arthur. Milverton is silent.

Ellesmere. Yes: he has some gleams and glimpses of honesty left. Now, for you, Sir Arthur. Do you remember walking with me up that hill near Springfield farm, when you told me that statesmanship was a thankless affair? You had once a hand in two or three great measures; but nobody gave you any credit for them. If, however, you had but given to the world that new edition of Aristotle, which was always in your mind, with copious notes, (of course, from the German,) and with an account of the various theories of ethics and metaphysics that had prevailed since Aristotle's time,

you would have done something which the world would not willingly let die.

Cranmer. Sir Arthur is silent.

Ellesmere. If any of you dare to interrupt, I shall take him or her in hand immediately. Now there is Cranmer. He can make a wonderful likeness of that gate-post, which is visible from the window there. And he said to me, (it is true it was some years ago, but that does not vary the matter) that the minor people in parliamentary official life had little or no credit given to them for their great labours. He wished he had been firmer with his father when he (Cranmer) proposed to become an artist. He thought he should have been a faithful one at least: and you should have heard how eloquent he was, when he said that the works of an artist were delightful to future generations—that they elicited from those generations the same great thoughts that had pervaded the artist's mind while he was making his pictures; and, in short, that Titian was the man of the past the most to be envied.

Lady Ellesmere. Mr. Cranmer is silent.

Ellesmere. I can see that my lady wishes to know what I can say about her; otherwise she would not have interrupted me. Her idea of life is to be a hospital nurse. She attends some hospital once a fortnight; and I reserve all my domestic difficulties for that day. She comes back thoroughly pleased with herself, and, therefore, with me. On that day, she is good enough to

remember that important third vow in the words "love, honour, and obey," of which she is somewhat oblivious on the other thirteen days. On that day Cato is allowed to come in after dinner to see me. What wonderful creatures dogs are! Cato knows "hospital day" as well as I do; and howls furiously if there is any delay in letting him free to enter the dining-room. Then, too, he has some distant sense of how he ought to behave to Mildred. He supposes her, foolish dog, to be a friend of mine; and, therefore, somebody to whom a certain attention must be paid, though he well knows that she does not very much like him. Accordingly, after exuberant demonstrations to me, he politely puts his big paws upon her lap, and looks up into her face. She receives his attention with some timidity for herself, and much fearfulness for her gown. But it is very good of her to endure him at all. Oh! you have no idea how agreeable Lady Ellesmere is—on hospital days.

Lady Ellesmere. Well, you can't say anything about my sister. She is thoroughly contented with her lot in life.

Ellesmere. The most discontented of all of you! I once had the honour of travelling abroad with Mr. and Mrs. Milverton. We came to one of the vast hotels in Switzerland. The weather was rainy. Milverton and I, nevertheless, made excursions—she remained at the hotel, and made the acquaintance of Madame Blanchard, the manager of the establishment. You should have

heard how Mrs. Milverton lauded that woman, and envied her lot. I could see that Mrs. Milverton's ideal of life was to be at the head of some great concern like this hotel, in which avocation all the powers of organization which she possesses, and her husband talks about, would have a fitting field. She spoke with a kind of enthusiasm of the number of cooks and laundry-maids employed. She would kindly have allowed Milverton to be the nominal master of the hotel; but precious little interference would have been permitted on his part.

I said that it was wet weather when we first came to the hotel: "Just showery, showery, wi' rain between," as a Scotch gillie said to a friend of mine, justifying his Scotch weather to the English mind. Well, then, it brightened up, and an excursion was proposed to some place ending with the word "horn." Notwithstanding it was fine, Mrs. Milverton declined to go with us, making several rambling and vague excuses. I saw through it at once. Milverton did not. Husbands do not always understand their wives. After we had left, I asked our guide whether something was not going to happen at the hotel.

"Oh, yes," he said; "the bishop is coming, and all his clergy. It is the confirmation; my Annchen is to be confirmed."

"And Madame Blanchard will be very busy, will she not?"

"Yes," he replied, "the old lady is in a dreadful way. There are thirty more beds wanted, and more than seventy new people are expected at the table-d'hôte to-day."

I felt sure that this was the reason why Mrs. Milverton would not accompany us. Her pleasure was to see what arrangements the clever Madame would make to meet the difficulty, and perhaps to assist her by suggestions. This was more interesting to Mrs. Milverton than going to any number of Horns, whatever grandeur of view might be seen from them; but Milverton could not make it out at all: dense mortal!

There is no audible dissent from Mrs. Milverton.

I shall dispose of Mauleverer in a single sentence. He has not had any active occupation: but he once said to me, that he wished he had been more actively employed in life, as it would have enabled him to observe more closely the large and continuous folly of mankind.

Lady Ellesmere. What about yourself, my dear? You are, as we all know, the most contented of mankind.

Ellesmere. No: I am not. I should like to have been a country gentleman—not one with a great estate; but what the French call a *Hobereau*, and what the Irish call a Squireen. I am the most unsedentary of men; and have been condemned to a sedentary life. How I should have enjoyed going about with my dogs, and visiting my pigs and my cattle!

Lady Ellesmere. It is true. This is one of John's dreams; and he often inflicts upon me long tirades as to the happiness to be found in this squireen life. He is pleased to forget, that he would have spoken rudely of the clergyman's sermons; that he would have had a quarrel with the churchwardens; that he would have made himself odious to the other vestrymen; that he would have had a dispute, carried through all the courts, with the greater squire about boundaries, or game; and that, after we had been in this abode of bliss for about a year and a half, there would not have been a single neighbour who would have come near us. He would then have quarrelled with me. Distinctly foreseeing this event, I have always set my face against this *Hobereau* or Squireen scheme. I admit that I am fond of doing what I can to relieve the sufferings of the poor people in the hospitals. Indeed, it is probable that I have some skill in nursing, seeing that I have always had the care of one Incurable.

Ellesmere. We have none of these nasty sarcasms on the days when she attends her hospital.

But now, without any joking, is it not really singular that, with a number of such differently constituted men and women as we are, it does appear that not one of us is thoroughly satisfied with his, or her, vocation?

I have often heard Milverton say, when he has been praising proverbs, that one of the most curious facts connected with literature, is, that no historical record

remains regarding the authorship of these proverbs. I am going to make a proverb which will sum up the whole of our recent discourse; and I beg to be remembered, as the author of this proverb. It is, Every man believes that every other man's bread and butter is nicer than his own. I have noticed this fact a hundred times.

Sir Arthur. I must confess that Ellesmere has made a good point. What he says is borne out by the fact which I myself have noticed—viz.: that not one father in a hundred is pleased at any of his sons adopting the profession, or calling, in which he, the father, has been employed. That, too, notwithstanding that the father may have been very successful in the profession or calling.

Milverton. It is a very melancholy fact, if it be a fact—I mean what Ellesmere has been asserting—and yet there is something grand about it too.

Ellesmere. Yes, Milverton always finds out something very delightful in the most discouraging facts.

Milverton. You see every man, being an immortal creature, imagines a greater sphere of usefulness for himself, than any which he fulfils, however well he may fulfil it, in this life. The discontent is merely the discontent of a being who is too large in his aims and hopes, to find any full employment for them on this earth.

Sir Arthur. I don't think I quite appreciated what you said, at the beginning of the essay, about our coming

to understand the tritest sayings, and the full meaning of proverbs.

Milverton. Let me give you instances of what I meant, though, I dare say, I shall not be able to give good ones, nothing, at least, equal to Ellesmere's. For when one endeavours to recall any portion of that vast body of anonymous literature, the proverbial, one seldom is happy in the selection. "More haste, worse speed;" "The half is greater than the whole;" "The absent are always in the wrong;" "Nobody knows where the shoe pinches, but the wearer," are all of them proverbial sayings, of which, in looking back upon life, one learns the full value.

Still, I have not hit upon any one proverb which fully illustrates my meaning. In looking over this old library I found a collection of proverbs. Here it is; and I will try whether I can find any one that will be exactly suitable for my purpose. The first thing I come upon is very good, but is not exactly what I want. It is from the Italian. "He commands enough, who obeys a wise man."

The next is better—"He that hath a fellow-ruler, hath an over-ruler." That, I think, was first said by Pope Sixtus V., when he found his College of Cardinals to be very troublesome; and he put the saying in this way: "He that has partners has masters." It takes some time, and some knowledge of life, before one discovers the full force of that proverb.

The next one is still better for my purpose: "The offender never pardons." I suppose something of that kind has been said in all languages, and how true it is! Not taken literally, of course: no proverb is absolutely true; but all experience of life shows that it is the one who gives the offence, with whom it is most difficult to make up. The reason, too, is obvious. The offending man is secretly very angry with himself, and he has to forgive both you and himself—himself for having been unreasonable, and you for having been in the way when he was unreasonable.

Ellesmere. Please give me the book; I shall find something good in it, I have no doubt.

> "As the good man saith, so say we;
> But as the good woman saith, so it must be."

"As great pity to see a woman weep, as a goose go bare-foot." "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure" is, of course, the proverb that would be more suitable to Milverton's purpose.

Lady Ellesmere. Please take the book from John, and shut it up. It is clear that most of the proverbs in the world have been made by men, and are a very one-sided performance.

Milverton. But, before we leave this proverbial subject, don't you see what I meant: that what is commonplace and trite, is the thing that we find out to be true?

Sir Arthur. Well, you know, Milverton, it is the

same thing with Shakespeare. I have observed that the young persons who have much force and honesty of mind, seldom appreciate their Shakespeare. They are apt to think him an over-rated man; but the admiration for Shakespeare goes on steadily growing as we advance in life.

Milverton. That bears out my view, Sir Arthur. The quantity of common sense expressed by Shakespeare is amazing—also what is commonplace and trite, only it is brought in so well, and is so admirably worded, that you hardly perceive the triteness and the commonplaced-ness. A volume of proverbs might be made out of Shakespeare's works.

Ellesmere. Now I am going to show you, Milverton, where you exaggerated greatly. It was where you said that the individual had the power to injure his fellow-men to a fearful extent,

Milverton. You have hit a blot. I felt, as I was reading, that my words at that point were not sufficiently guarded. What I meant, and ought to have expressed, was, that the individual, in his own circle, in his own possible sphere of action, had a huge power of doing mischief. Of course the circle of Hodge, the farm-labourer, is a very different one from that of mighty conquerors, or great statesmen; but in his circle, of whatever circumference it may be, a man has great power for good or for evil.

Ellesmere. Let this day be marked with the whitest

of chalk, for an author has confessed himself to be in the wrong, and his critic in the right.

Cranmer. I liked what you said about misrepresentation, Milverton. My experience goes with yours: I never met with a man who bore misrepresentation with thorough calmness and complacency.

Milverton. Nor I, and I will venture to say that there are thousands of persons of all ranks explaining to others, at this moment, that they and their doings, or sayings, have been misrepresented. It forms a large part of the talk of the world.

Ellesmere. I have only one more remark to make; but it is a very serious one. I believe that you were entirely wrong when you asserted that, as we advanced in life, we were less captivated by eloquence, that we more and more respected solid qualities, and less and less esteemed brilliant qualities; that the justly proportionate character was the one for which we finally reserved our admiration; and the like. This is all unreal stuff. It comes from an author's considering what is right to be said, and what is best to be said, and not what is the fact.

Milverton. This is rather strong language, is it not?

Ellesmere. Not too strong. One of the principal characteristics of the late Lord Lytton's writings, is a certain depth of worldly shrewdness, which is occasionally revealed in them. I remember once being

singularly struck by an observation of his, which rather counteracts what Master Milverton has said. Lord Lytton asserted that it was the liveliest of the young who received the largest bequests from the middle-aged, or the old. This assertion opens a vista of contradiction to Milverton's sayings. We do not admire or love, or even fully appreciate the results, when embodied in other persons, of our own experience in life.

Milverton. I can make no answer to this statement. I can only say that, for my own part, I more and more admire and appreciate what I have called the justly proportionate character, and that I only said what I thought, and was not looking out for the proper things to say.

Sir Arthur. I must own, Milverton, that I think there is a great deal of truth in what Ellesmere has said: and, if I may be allowed to make the remark, I should say that there was a little inconsistency between your assertion that our passions, our affections, and our feelings of joy and sorrow do not much diminish as age advances, and your assertion that we learn to appreciate the solid qualities more and more, and what is brilliant less and less.

Milverton. I fail to see the inconsistency. I delight in wit, in brilliancy of every kind; but I fancy (it may be an arrogant fancy) that I put these qualifications into their proper places, and have learnt to admire other qualifications more than I used to do.

I do not appreciate Ellesmere's wit less than I formerly did; but when he condescends to be sensible and judicious, as well as witty, I estimate more and more these intervals of solid and sound thought.

Ellesmere. After this, pray do not let us have any more talk. He is sure to spoil this compliment, if it be a compliment, should we provoke him to add another word.

Milverton. No; I have something more to add. As I have said again and again, I endeavoured, during the essay, to keep somewhat clear of the greater, at any rate, of the more painful, subjects which would naturally recur to any one on looking back upon life. One of my main objects was to insist upon the fact that very commonplace verities acquire a singular significance from our own personal experience, and indeed remove themselves from the cloudland of other people's experience to the hard and dry land of our own. The foregoing is a sort of apology for bringing forward a very trite matter which every one supposes that he already understands. I allude to the fact that corporate bodies and assemblages of men of all kinds are curiously devoid of conscience. Sayings, embodying this statement, have almost passed into proverbs. But, as I have shown to be the case with proverbs generally, the particular proverbs in question have seldom made any impression on any one's mind, until, in the course of an active life, he has found them to apply to himself.

This, however, was not what I chiefly intended to set before you. It is a matter of much more subtle experience, but still of sure experience, to which I wish to draw your attention.

Ellesmere. I wonder what is coming after this elaborate prelude.

Milverton. It is not only that these bodies, acting as bodies in their corporate capacity, will do very unjust things—such things as no individual amongst them would do if he were acting for himself; but that when a member of a corporate body acts as its representative, he is often found to be as devoid of conscience as the said corporate body. This, by the way, not unfrequently applies to the representatives of the highest bodies —even to those who represent governments. And, again, looking at the whole subject of personal representation, you will nearly always find that the representative hardens his heart against all those considerations of pity, tenderness, and forbearingness, which would have some weight, and ought to have some weight, with the persons represented. This is a result which is hardly to be arrived at, except by personal experience; and it is one of the conclusions that thoughtful men come to in looking back on life.

Ellesmere. Moral:—I am always making the morals for Milverton's fables, if I may call them so—Never deal with representatives, if you can manage to get near the principals.

Milverton. Yes, that is exactly it: and the moral is a very important one. The young often fear to deal with the principal, and think they should manage much better in dealing with the representative; but this is an entire delusion.

And here I leave this part of the subject.

Ellesmere. Sandy, some time ago, was very angry because I said his chief was a despot, and that he, of course, took the hue of his despotic master's mind.

Now, there is such a thing as a silent despotism.

Observe how we have all kept to social subjects merely because Milverton told us that much good time had been wasted in considering the ballot question, which time might have been so delightfully spent in considering drains and sewers, foul air, foul water, and adulterated food.

I consider that Sir Arthur's essays, Mauleverer's, and my own, have all fought shy of politics, and have been devoted to such social subjects as Intrusiveness, Over-Publicity, Hospitality, Vulgarity, Ridicule, and the Uniform extent of human folly in all generations.

Cranmer. I am fated to take exception to any general statement of Ellesmere's. Did not Milverton in one of his essays dwell upon the difficult question of the improvement of government bills?

Ellesmere. You simple man! Did you not see that he did not care a farthing about your political bills? He

was anxious to add the superfluous wisdom of permanent officials to parliamentary wisdom, only when considering bills which bear on social questions.

Milverton. Where is the pressure nowadays? Is it for political reform? Not much of that. But the pressure for reform in social matters is strong and continuous from all the sensible people in this realm.

Ellesmere. Now, Sandy, if you ever make use of our essays and lucubrations, take this as your title for them, "Social Pressure." It is vague; sounds important; does not tell too much; and, at any rate, it keeps clear of politics. You need not say from whom the pressure comes: each reader will suppose that it comes from himself.

Milverton. And so it ought to come; for, you may depend upon it, social subjects are those which, at the present moment, most concern us all, from the highest to the lowest.

Mauleverer. There is one point, Milverton, which I wonder you did not touch upon; and it is this, that as men advance in life, they become more truthful and more sincere. It is one of those odd fables, apparently believed by mankind in all ages, that truth and sincerity are the virtues of the young.

Ellesmere. This is an astounding proposition!

Mauleverer. No less just, than astounding. Truth would almost go out of the world, if it were not for middle-aged and elderly people.

Milverton. I am as much surprised as Ellesmere is. What do you mean, Mauleverer? Give us an illustration.

Mauleverer. We went out in a boat the other day. You and Ellesmere were good enough to accompany us; but amused yourselves all the time by telling us what an odious and detestable thing boating is. Now no young man would have done that. He would not like to go against the prevailing sentiment of his company; would conceal his own sentiments; and would even pretend to be pleased with what he secretly disliked. If that is not insincerity, I do not know what is. You must not say, it would be respectfulness to his elders and betters; the same thing would occur, if it were a party of young men.

Milverton. There is a great deal in what you say; but I think there is a large admixture of causes for the result which you indicate.

Mauleverer. I will not argue the question; but will only ask you, for the future, to try and observe whether there is not much truth in my assertion.

Ellesmere. It is generally very hard to extract a compliment to ourselves out of anything Mauleverer may say; but I think we may do so now. It is clear that Johnson, being juvenile, is the only person amongst us who is untruthful and insincere. The rest of us, with the exception of the ladies, being decidedly middle-aged, have become models of truth and sincerity.

Sir Arthur. I wish, Ellesmere, that, in addition to our being models of truth and sincerity, we had been models of suggestiveness as regards the important questions Milverton has put before us. He has made me think, as I never thought before, of the dangers and the difficulties attending the agglomeration of large numbers of people in great towns—an operation which is evidently proceeding in this age more rapidly than ever. He has made me see how this fact should induce us more and more to attend to what are called social reforms. Of political reforms we have probably had enough of late years to last us for some little time.

Milverton. I have often dared to think (perhaps it was a wicked thought—certainly a bold one) what an advantage it would be for this country if parliamentary discussions were put aside for two or three years, and the attention of the country were directed to administration. I could even venture to think, that during that happy period, political personages might enjoy supreme rest, and the Government of the country be carried on by their Private Secretaries, who are generally very intelligent fellows, and by the permanent officials of each department.

Ellesmere. I declare that Milverton is indulging in a strain of sarcasm which would better befit other persons in the company, such as Cranmer and myself.

Cranmer. I decline to be placed in this conjunction.

I suppose, Milverton, you would allow that during this *interregnum*, parliamentary committees might sit which had for their object those social and administrative reforms which are so dear to you.

Milverton. Certainly. But now, without any jesting or sarcasm, or cynicism, do you not own with me that there is an enormous deal to be done in those branches of human effort which have nothing whatever to do with the redistribution of political power, with theological matters, or with any of those questions which are abundant in strife, and which produce very little improvement for the great masses of mankind?

They were all inclined to assent to this proposition, and so the conversation ended.

On remarking afterwards on this conversation, Sir John Ellesmere said, "I do believe the world gets on best by each man pushing forward to the utmost the objects of the career in which he is embarked. Milverton is an administrator; and doubtless he perceives what good works might be accomplished by improvements in administration. This view is not likely to be taken up by many persons, therefore I am quite willing that he should put into it whatever force he

can bring. It is sure to be sufficiently counteracted by other influences." This sentiment was much approved by the "Friends;" and, moreover, they agreed among themselves that, if any suggestion should occur to them which might aid Mr. Milverton in his fight for good administration, especially in reference to the management of great towns, they would take care to impart it to him.

Alas! this was the final day of our friendly conversations. The Easter holidays were over; and, on the Monday, we returned, with somewhat of the heavy hearts of boys going to school, to our work in town again.

THE END.

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